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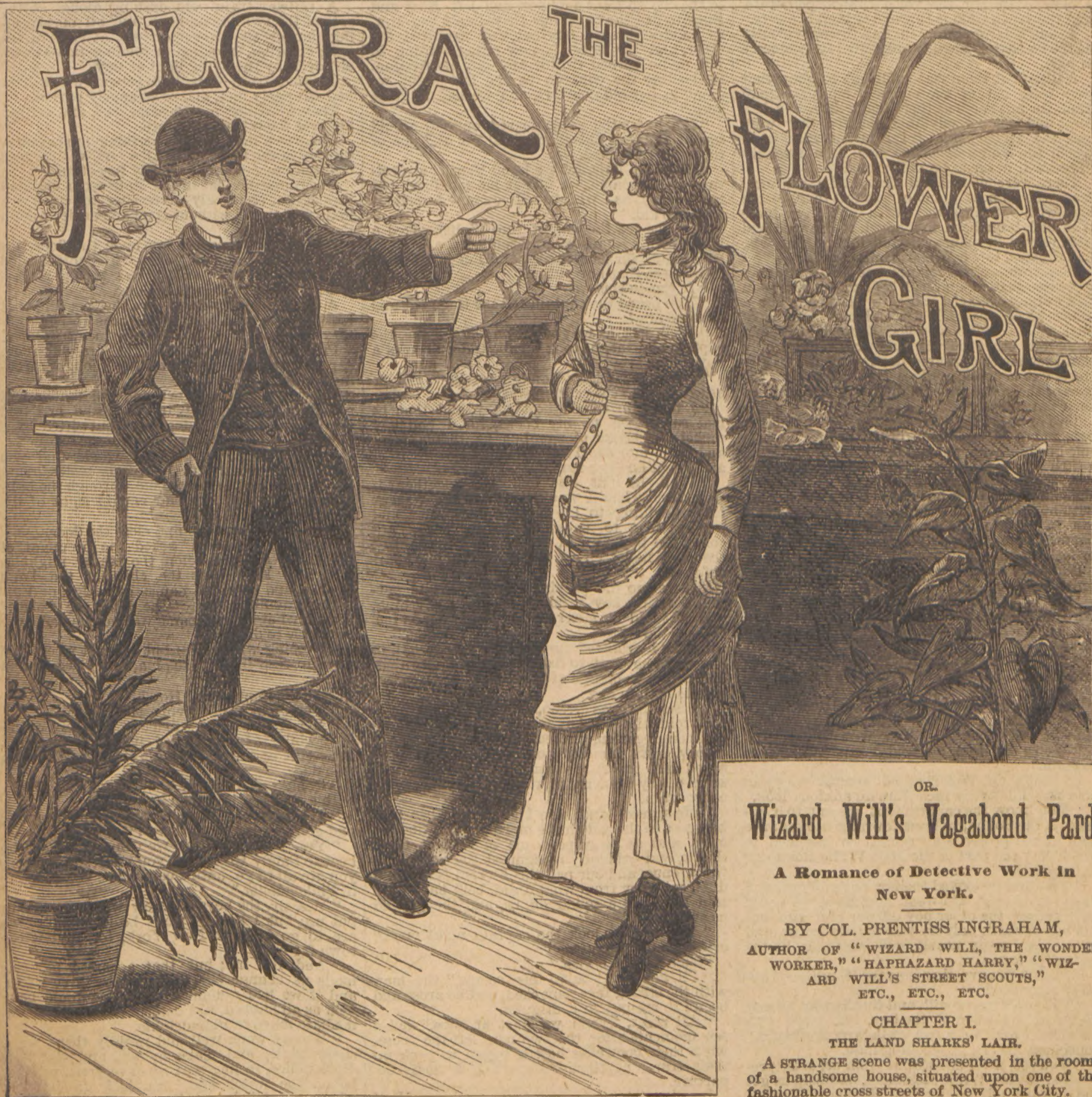
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OR.

Wizard Will's Vagabond Pard.

A Romance of Detective Work in
New York.BY COL. PRENTISS INGRAHAM,
AUTHOR OF "WIZARD WILL, THE WONDER
WORKER," "HAPHAZARD HARRY," "WIZ-
ARD WILL'S STREET SCOUTS,"
ETC., ETC., ETC.

CHAPTER I.

THE LAND SHARKS' LAIR.

A STRANGE scene was presented in the room of a handsome house, situated upon one of the fashionable cross streets of New York City. It was a residence to select for a comfortable home, and yet its doors were closed, its brow-

"I HAVE HEARD OF WIZARD WILL, ARE YOU HE?" SHE ASKED.
"I AM, AND YOU ARE MY PRISONER, MISS," WAS THE RESPONSE.

stone steps were covered with dust, its windows were shut tight, and rumor had it that the house was haunted, and its heir was traveling in Europe, with a purse sufficiently long not to care for the income that the residence might bring him.

Gossips said that the former owner had brought there a young wife, and that she had married him, a man beyond the meridian of life, for his money, and slighted the one to whom she had been pledged, and who held her heart.

Revengeful toward both, so the gossips also said, the lover had disguised himself as a servant, obtained a place in the household, and one morning the rich man and his bride were found dead in their beds, while the butler had disappeared.

Since then the house had been closed, and, as the world believed, unoccupied; and yet, upon its top floor was the strange scene that will now be presented to the reader.

It is about midnight, and the two large rooms upon the upper floor are occupied by a number of men.

The windows are securely closed and curtained, the light comes from lamps, though elegant gas fixtures hang from the ceiling.

The sides of the walls are all padded, so that a blow, a fall, or the voice, cannot penetrate, and the ventilation is through skylights above.

About a large table in one room, evidently used as a sitting-room, were seated fully a score of men.

A glance at them was sufficient to show that they were out of the ordinary run of human kind, for not one was there but who had a history, and not an enviable one, for they were one and all fugitives from justice, men upon whom the stamp of crime had been strongly impressed, never to be obliterated.

There were men of all sizes and conditions, from the almost giant of six feet four, to the man with but the growth of a boy; from those who had been born in a hovel, to one who had been reared in refinement and luxury, but who had dropped low by some criminal act.

One strange circumstance was that every man was close shaven, and had his hair cut short—in fact, almost shaved close to his head; but a glance along the walls where hung clothing of various descriptions, wigs, false beards and numerous other disguises, showed very plainly that they never appeared in public as they really were, but kept themselves concealed from the eyes of the police who might recognize them as their natural selves.

Two of the men were playing chess, another pair had a backgammon board before them, a third couple were engaged in a game of checkers, a fifth was writing, a sixth reading a daily paper, a seventh devoured eagerly a novel, an eighth was seated at one end of a table sketching with no mean skill, a ninth sat in an easy-chair lost in reverie and smoking a pipe, while the balance were either playing cards and gambling or looking on.

Suddenly the door swung open and a man entered in haste.

He was, to all appearances, a minister, for his garb was of a clerical cut, he wore a white necktie, spectacles, and his hair was long and straight.

"Falls, there's music in the air!" he cried as he entered the room, and every eye was at once upon him.

Throwing his spectacles and high hat upon the table, while he dropped into a chair, he continued:

"We've got to move, and I want to find the captain."

"What's up, Wolf?" asked several voices in chorus, while every face wore an anxious look.

"You know the captain sent me out to a village on the Sound, to hunt down the boy we once had in our power, and whom we intended to make play the part of the little Willie Rossmore kidnapped?"

"Yes, and he looked the boy out and out, and as the kidnapped kid went and died, we could have passed the other boy off for him and got the big reward, only he was too fly for us, and by getting away nearly got our necks in the noose," said one.

"I ha'n't fergive ther boy for it, nuther," another remarked.

"The cap'n never will, and that is why he sent me to get possession of the boy, who lives with his mother and sister in a cottage on the Sound," continued the clerical-looking man.

"You see, after he escaped from us, after pretending to play Willie Rossmore, and help us get the reward offered by old Rossmore for his stolen boy, he led the police upon us, and Cap-

tain Daly of the Force took a great shine to the youngster."

"We know he did," said one.

"He let him go down to Maryland and tell old Rossmore all about our plot, and that his boy was dead, and where he was buried, for the youngster's ears were wide open the little time he was with us, and what he didn't find out wasn't worth knowing."

"After he came back, Captain Daly, knowing the boy was poor, gave him, or rented him, the cottage on the Sound, where he went to live with his mother, and more, he made the kid a special officer."

"No!" cried a dozen voices.

"Fact! and more, he just got the best of the captain and our comrades, Nick and Buck, and I'll tell you how he did it, for it's funny."

"You see, Captain Ed went out with the two boys named to get the youngster, and overtook him on the road home with his little sister."

"The captain knocked the boy down to put the nippers on his wrists, when the little girl opened on him with a revolver, and he had to git."

"His carriage was coming along behind, with Buck and Nick in it, and so he hopped in pretty lively and drove away for all he was worth."

"The girl wounded him slightly, and he came to the city to hunt a doctor, and left Nick and Buck to bag the boy; but they didn't bag him, as he straightened one out, and captured the other, and the latter is now either waiting in jail, or he turned traitor and got his freedom for leading the cops on us the last night we spent in our old quarters, and we had to come here."

"It's lucky the cap'n feared our pal would squeal and had this place fixed for us," one of the band remarked.

"You bet it is, for we Land Sharks are getting such a name, we find it hard hiding; but to my story, as I wish to tell you how I made it with the kid."

"Did he get the best of you, Wolf?" asked a large man, with a strong, resolute face.

"He did, for a certainty, and I'm just out of jail, where that boy put me."

"It was in this way:

"You heard the captain tell me to go out and capture him?"

"Well, just as we got out on the avenue, the captain and me, he took a cab, and up comes a boy to me."

"He was a likely, handsome fellow, and he asked me who the captain was."

"I told him some ghost story, and that he had subscribed to my books, for I had my sachel of books along; but he didn't take, and went into the Florist's, and he asked him, and so got another name."

"Well, he put this and that together, it seems, and when I was sitting on the cottage piazza, talking to his mother and sister, and urging them to subscribe to my books, out comes the boy, gun in hand, and I recognized the one I had seen in the avenue a few hours before."

"It was no use playing book-agent and parson, for that boy wouldn't swallow anything, and just told his sister to put the irons on me, and she did it, too."

"Then he waltzed me up to the village jail, to stay until he went to town to-morrow morning, and left me in charge of the constable and jailer, who is both in one."

"I saw he was green, so played him for a fool, told him the boy would be prosecuted by my congregation, offered to let him keep my money, gave him my books as a present, and asked him to let me come to town and get some of my deacons to return with me in the early train."

"He agreed—and here I am; but when that boy goes to the jail in the morning he'll find me gone, and, as he suspects me of being a Land Shark, and evidently recognized the captain in the avenue, and our pal, the Florist, told him a different story from what I did, he'll have Captain Daly and a squad on us, and they'll find us even here."

"You'd better look the captain up at once," cried one man, anxiously.

"That's what I wish."

"I'll go with you to his rooms," the man with the strong face remarked, and he arose and began to rig out in a disguise.

"All right, Tiger; we start at once," and a few moments after the two men left the room, while their comrades hastily began to pack up their traps, as though expecting a hasty departure.

Leaving the secret rooms the two men, Wolf and Tiger, and men whose nature well suited

the names their chief had given them, descended the padded stairs to the first floor, their way lighted by lamps, and reaching the kitchen, where the same caution and secrecy was observed, they raised a trap in the floor, and making their way to the cellar, they raised what appeared to be a part of the stone wall, but which was a cleverly stuccoed door in the wall.

A tunnel-way was revealed, and entering it, they continued on for some little distance, reaching at last another door, which let them into a building evidently used as a greenhouse.

From this they let themselves out into a street, having first glanced up and down to see that no one was near to see them make their exit.

"Now for the captain's quarters as quickly as we can get there," said Tiger, and then set off at a rapid pace up the fashionable avenue.

CHAPTER II.

THE RAILWAY ACCIDENT.

It was the afternoon following the scene in the lair of the band of Land Sharks, and night was coming on; but with a clear sky and full moon peering above the horizon it did not threaten to be at all dark.

A railway train went dashing along, at the rate of thirty miles an hour, and all unsuspecting danger the passengers sat at ease in the cars, chatting, smoking, or reading newspapers or novels by the dying light of day.

On that train were two persons whose lives had strangely met, and as strangely parted.

They were not in the same car, and neither knew of the other's existence.

One was a man of most striking appearance, dressed in the height of fashion, and with a face that once seen was not readily forgotten.

He occupied a seat in the state-room car and was alone, seemingly preferring to enjoy the luxury of travel without companionship, and in the best style.

Half a dozen papers lay upon the floor, his luggage was on one seat, with gold-headed cane and umbrella, and he was gazing listlessly at the scenery as he flew along.

A man of forty-five years, he yet did not look his age, and his bearing was rather military, as though he had been named a soldier.

Presently a man entered the drawing-room car, and walked along the aisle as though searching for some one.

He was in clerical garb and the reader will recognize him as the man Wolf, who had told the story of his having been outwitted by a boy.

"Ah, captain, I thought I would find you here, sir, knowing your luxurious tastes," said Wolf, entering the state-room, through the half-open door of which he had caught sight of the occupant.

"Ah, Wolf, come in and close the door."

"Anything wrong?" asked the occupant of the state-room, and whom the reader might as well now know was the chief of the Land Sharks, and bore the names of "Elegant Ed," "The Captain," and "The King of Cards," though what his real name was no one had ever been able to discover.

"Nothing wrong, sir; but I forgot where you were to stop in Philadelphia, so wished to find out."

"At the Continental Hotel."

"You do like good living, sir."

"Yes, Wolf, and I will have it to my dying day, while, if I am hanged, it shall be in a full-dress suit and white kid gloves," was the calm rejoinder.

"Don't speak of it, sir," demurred Wolf, with a shudder, and then he added:

"The boys are all along sir, as you directed, and going in twos and threes."

"Yes, I saw them as we came down on the boat to Sandy Hook; but you understand where you are all to go, until I can secure you quarters in Philadelphia."

"Yes, sir, the boys all know where we are to put up; but I hope it won't be long before we are to go back to New York, for that is the town for me."

"And for me; but that accursed boy has made us change our hiding-place three times, and if we had remained there, he would have seen us all nabbed, so I determined upon an immediate move to Philadelphia."

"We can work well and rapidly there, for a short while, and make money, and the New York police, feeling that we have gone, will not be on the watch, and I can look up quarters where we will be wholly secure, and within a few months we can return to them."

"Now I do not care to be seen talking to you, so you had better return to your car, and in the morning come to the Continental and see me."

"You register there as—"

"Doctor Edwin Edgar."

"Ah, yes. Good-afternoon, doctor," and Wolf left the drawing-room car and returned to his own.

On his way back he passed a gentleman seated in one of the regular passenger cars of the train.

This was the other person to whom I referred as being one of the two who had so strangely met, and strangely parted.

"That man has a fine face, and I would rather have him for a friend than a foe," thought Wolf, as he passed him, and was attracted by the stranger's appearance.

He was a person of superb physique, with broad shoulders, and the appearance of one who possessed great strength.

His face was clean shaven, every feature strongly cut, and his ruddy complexion, indicative of perfect health, gave the idea that he was not as old by half a dozen years as his gray hair would lead one to suppose.

He had a kindly expression in his dark eyes, and about his resolute mouth was the look of one who had suffered deeply.

He was well dressed, carried little baggage, and was reading a paper, but had glanced up at Wolf as he had passed, and seemingly a judge of human nature, muttered to himself:

"That man is a villain, in spite of his wearing the clothes of a clergyman."

Hardly had Wolf reached his seat, when there came several quick, sharp blasts of the whistle, a sudden jarring of the train, a tremor, a crash, and then from amidst the wreck of the engine and half a dozen cars arose wails of agony and shrieks of terror from men and women who had been crushed and frightened almost to death.

"A good shaking up, but not a cut or a bruise, so I can look after those who have been less fortunate," said the man just described, and he extricated himself from his seat and made his way out of the car.

The drawing-room car was next to his, and it had been badly wrecked, and many were groaning amid the ruins.

The splendid-looking man, who had been the sole occupant of the state-room had been hurled from his seat and had fallen with a force that seemed to have killed him, for he lay motionless an instant, and then he raised his head, glanced about him, and from his lips broke the cry:

"Great God!"

The words had been uttered at the sight of the tall form of the stranger, who, escaping from the other car unhurt, had come suddenly upon his less fortunate fellow-traveler.

It was still daylight, though twilight was gathering, and each man saw distinctly the face of the other.

"You know me?" said the stranger sternly.

"Yes, you are Kent Lomax," said Elegant Ed, speaking with a seeming effort.

"Yes, I am Kent Lomax, the man who, sixteen years ago saved your life, who made you my friend, took you to the home of the maiden who was pledged to be my wife, and trusted you as one who had honor.

"How did you repay me?"

"You stole from me my promised bride, stole her like a thief in the night one Christmas Eve, the day before our wedding-day.

"She, fascinated by your elegant manners and manly beauty, forgot me, her plain farmer-lover, and fled with you.

"The shock killed her poor mother, and there was a death in the old farm-house instead of a wedding; and, over the dead body of her mother I swore revenge against you.

"I sought you out, and forced you to fight me.

"I fell, terribly wounded, and you escaped, as I learned from the man who was your second, and who, becoming a tramp, died on my farm, by his having put no bullet in my pistol.

"After long months I recovered, and for two years I was in wretched health; but at last I recovered, and then once more I sought you far and wide.

"At last I heard that you were dead, that you had been killed in a railway accident, and I gave up the search, and returned to my lonely bachelor life on my farm in Maryland.

"To-night I find you here, crushed in this accident; but I swear to you that you shall not die.

"Oh, no! I will nurse you back to life, that you may face me as man to man, and give me a chance to avenge the past.

"No, no! You shall not die, and I will seek aid to have you borne from here to comfortable quarters.

"I meant to help those in suffering, but they are forgotten now, in meeting you, and I will see that you shall have the best of surgical skill, and all that money can buy, for you must not die; no, you must not die now, *but live to fall by my hand!*"

As the stranger spoke he hastened away in the gathering twilight to seek aid to bear the man he so hated to the nearest place where a refuge could be found.

It was not an easy task to find men, in that time of horror to so many, who would leave those they were endeavoring to succor; but by promising a most liberal reward for their services, he secured the help of two individuals, who returned with him.

"Great heaven! He has gone!" Such was the cry that broke from the stranger's lips as he returned to the spot to find that Elegant Ed had departed, but whither no one knew, and the groan that seemed to well up from the inmost heart of the strong man, proved how deeply he felt the escape of his foe.

CHAPTER III.

THE POSSESSOR OF A SECRET.

It was the night following the accident on the railroad, in which several had lost their lives, and many had been seriously injured.

In a suite of elegant rooms in the Continental Hotel in Philadelphia, reclined upon a lounge the superb form of the Card King.

He was pale, and a slight wound upon his head had been skillfully dressed.

He had registered upon the hotel books as:

"DOCTOR EDWIN EDGAR,

New York,"

and had asked for a parlor and bedroom, sent for a physician and made himself comfortable.

He had eaten but little of the tempting dinner served in his room, and seemed rather to be lost in deep reverie of an unpleasant kind.

Presently a tap came upon his door and a bell-boy entered, and handed him a card that read:

"REVEREND A. WOLF."

"Ask the clergyman to come up," he said, to the bell boy, and a few moments after there entered the same individual whom the reader will remember was seen in the den of the Land Sharks in New York, and upon the train that met with the serious accident.

"Ah, my dear Mr. Wolf, I am glad to see you," said Elegant Ed, as the bell-boy was closing the door, but the instant after he said in his cynical way:

"The devil takes care of his own, I see, Wolf, as you were not killed in that accursed smash-up."

"I may say the same to you, captain, for I see that you yet live, though you did get your head chipped."

"Don't be insolent, Wolf, for that I never tolerate in any one, especially my subordinates."

"I am not insolent, but just, captain, as we are both of a kind."

"By Heaven, sir! do you think I am so injured as to be incapable of making you feel my power?"

"Are you drunk?" and Elegant Ed arose from the lounge.

"No, captain, I am painfully sober, and I would not object to a drink at your expense; but we must not quarrel, for I came here with something important to tell you."

"Well, sir?"

"Don't look like a thunder-cloud, captain, but tell me how you escaped in that wreck?"

"Were not any of my men killed?"

"Not one, but several were bruised slightly."

"But I am amazed at your escape, as the whole end of your car was torn open."

"Yes, and I was hurled outside of it and momentarily stunned, receiving this cut, as you see."

"Is it not dangerous?"

"No, but I do not like it."

"It may mar your good looks, but that is all, and you were fortunate that it was no worse."

"I heard that you were very badly hurt, and I went with others to aid you, and found you gone."

"Yes? But who told you?"

"Mr. Kent Lomax," was the very quiet reply, though there was a world of meaning in

the way in which it was spoken, and the man calling himself Doctor Edgar realized why it was that his companion had suddenly assumed a manner toward him that savored of insolence.

But though his face changed color Doctor Edgar asked with assumed indifference:

"And who is Mr. Kent Lomax?"

"He told me that he was an old enemy of yours, and more, that you had stolen his lady-love and then shot him, when he had tracked you, to seek revenge.

"He had recognized you, and believed you seriously injured, and had gone for help, for he was determined you should live that he might kill you; but you had mysteriously disappeared, and all search for you was unavailing."

"And he told you all this nonsense?"

"And more, captain," was the significant reply.

"What else?" and Doctor Edgar nerved himself to hear what else his foe had said.

"He told me this because I had remarked to him that I was a detective."

"Indeed!"

"Yes, and so he gave me the particulars, as I have said, told me just who you were, and said he had five thousand dollars ready for me at any time I chose to call upon him and bring you."

"And so you are to sell me?" sneered Doctor Edgar.

"I did not say so, though he paid me a couple of hundred on account, as an earnest that he meant what he said."

"And you took it?"

"Of course I did."

"With what intention?"

Wolf knew well the man before him and his great strength.

He knew, too, his reckless disregard of human life, and he did not like the glitter in the dark eyes, so he determined to be very careful.

So he said:

"I would not let a chance slip to get hold of a couple of hundred, captain."

"No, you are right; but did you tell this man Lomax that you could find me?"

"Of course I told him that I thought I could; but I am no traitor to the band, captain; but I am making a big sacrifice in refusing the man's money as a reward, and I would like to be second in command of the Land Sharks."

"Ah! so as to step into my shoes if I am caught and hanged?"

"Naturally I would be commander, if such a sad fate were to befall you; but I have not the mind and talent that you have, and I hope you will be long spared to us, for no other man could save us from capture, and add to our fortune, as you can.

"No, no; I wish you always to be chief, but I would like to be next to you."

"I half way promised it to Tiger."

"Well, you did not wholly do so?"

"No, and I can make him keeper of our secret arsenal, and give you the lieutenantancy, for I have had my eye on you for the position; but I do not do so because I fear you, Wolf, for to sell me for five thousand dollars I do not believe you would, while, if Mr. Lomax were to demand satisfaction of me a second time, it would be but to go to his death."

"I do not believe that you fear him, captain."

"Oh, no; I have no fear. But I have an idea."

"Well, sir?"

"I will let you betray me to him and get your five thousand, after which I will give you a like amount to kill him."

"I'll do it, captain."

"It's a bargain then; but there is no immediate hurry. I will to-night look up safe quarters for you, make it known to the men that you are my lieutenant, and then I will leave you in command while I return to New York for a few weeks, as I have business there I cannot neglect.

"Upon my return we will play our little game upon Kent Lomax."

"I am ready at any time, captain," answered Wolf, who once more resumed his respectful manner toward his outlaw leader.

Soon after Wolf took his leave, but Elegant Ed met him that night at the abiding-place of the men, and a secret retreat having been found, the chief installed the man as his lieutenant, after which he took the train for New York, muttering as he settled back in the comfortable cushions of the palace car:

"I must now hunt that boy down, and then Wolf's doom is sealed, for I dare not trust him, for he possesses a secret upon which I must place the seal of silence beyond the possibility of betrayal."

CHAPTER IV.

THE YOUNG DETECTIVE AT HOME.

UPON the shores of Long Island Sound, and back on the hillside, fronting the high-road, dwelt the hero of my romance, at the time this story opens.

This hero was a boy of fifteen, well-grown for his age, and verging upon sixteen, he yet seemed older, from the look of calm dignity and bold resolution that dwelt in his face.

His home was a cosy cottage, surrounded by tastefully laid out grounds, with *parterres* of flowers, a vegetable garden, stable in the rear, and a couple of acres grazing land for the cows.

It was a pleasant, comfortable, homelike working place, and one would expect only happiness to dwell there.

Upon the small front piazza sat three persons, the occupants, excepting an old negro and his wife who dwelt in a cabin, on the hill, and did the chores about the place, from cooking to looking after the horse and cows.

The view spread out before the three persons was one of rare beauty, for the slope to the water's edge was gradual, a white beach ran along the shore, and in a small inlet lay at anchor a cat-rig boat, while a skiff and rowing shell had been drawn up beyond tide water mark.

The broad expanse of waters stretched out beyond, with the distant Connecticut shore, and many sails were visible, some heading for the great city, a few miles away, and others steering up the Sound.

Here and there a steamer cut its way along through the fleet of sailing vessels, and altogether the scene was one of rare beauty.

It was a Sabbath day, and the tolling of the church bells in several neighboring villages, reached the ears of the mother and her two children who sat upon the cottage piazza.

The former was a woman who was perhaps thirty-five, and yet hardly looking that age, for her face was very beautiful, refined, and yet so very, very sad.

It seemed a face that reflected a heart full of sorrow, and the faint smile hovering about the lips seemed to have been called there to hide the tears within the large tender eyes.

She was plainly, but neatly dressed, wore no jewelry, other than a gold ring, the pledge of matrimony, and seemed to be lost in painful reverie, as though looking back into a dreary past.

The boy, her son and my hero, is a handsome, fearless-faced lad, his features stamped with character beyond his years, and he appears to be one whom a person would trust as they might a man.

He is dressed in a suit of dark blue, wears a black slouch hat, and his carriage and general appearance are such that he might be taken for a cadet or middy.

He wears a handsome watch and chain, for he has just glanced at it to see the time, and a seal ring with a strange device, cut thereon encircle the little finger of his left hand.

The third person upon the piazza was a young girl verging upon thirteen years of age, and strangely like her mother, only her face is a sunshiny one, and her hair is golden.

Her form is *petite*, very graceful, and her manner very fascinating for one so young.

At last the mother spoke, and sadly said:

"Will, my son, it grieves me to feel that you lead the dangerous life you do."

"It is not as dangerous as you think, mother, for I seldom run great risks, and I know of no other career that could bring us the comforts we have," answered the youth.

"True, and we owe it all to you, Will, to your nerve and energy, for we were poor indeed until you became a detective."

"Just to think how we lived in that fearful tenement, until the day you were selected by that outlaw leader as one to use in making money for himself and band."

"Yes, mother; and I could have gone wrong, as they wished—deceived poor old Mr. Rossmore into believing I was his lost son, gotten the reward, and we could have had ample means; but instead, I played into their hands, escaped from them, led the police upon their den, and Captain Daly has made me a special detective officer, and to-day I have a gallant band of Boy Ferrets, and we will yet become known as the captors of Elegant Ed and his Land Sharks."

"But you run such fearful risks, Will!"

"Not half as great as you believe, mother, and for your sake and Pearl's I am most careful of myself."

"It is a great pleasure to have you with us,

as you are this Sabbath Day, for you hardly ever more than sleep at home."

"My work demands my time, mother, and I fear I shall be much away the coming week, so do not wait supper for me if I am not out on the five-thirty train any afternoon this week, and do not get anxious if I do not come by nine, as I shall have to remain all night."

"You are very busy then, brother?" asked Pearl.

"Yes, for the Land Sharks must be run to earth, and since Constable Ross let that pretended preacher and book-agent escape, after I had taken him to the jail, the band know now that I am a special officer and will be on the lookout."

"In fact, I half-believe he was sent here by Elegant Ed to find out all about me, and if he had been held, as Constable Ross should have held him, we could doubtless have gained much information of value, for he looked to me like one who would confess anything to save himself."

"They must be a bad lot indeed, my son, these criminals whom you call Land Sharks, for I have heard that to become one of the band one must be a murderer," said Mrs. Raymond.

"Yes, mother, they are held together by the secrets they know regarding each other; but I feel that I have a clew to find their haunt, and I will follow it up to-morrow when I go to the city."

"What has become of your friend, Foxey, Will?"

"Mother, is he not a strange boy?" asked Will Raymond, with sudden eagerness.

"He struck me as being a manly little fellow, the time you had him here with you, and I have noticed him with pity when I saw him about the village and knew that he was called The Vagabond and the Waif; but he had much that was good in him, poor boy that he was, when he sprung into the water and rescued Pearl, the day the steamer's gang-plank slipped and threw her overboard."

"Yes, brother; and who had saved my life none of us knew in the darkness, for I alone saw his face, and he would never have told had I not recognized him when he came home with you the night you captured the robbers on the hill, and I shall never forget him," and tears came into the beautiful eyes of the young girl, while Will said, thoughtfully:

"Foxey seems to try and make himself appear as ugly as possible; he is a strange one, for I have heard him use language as good as any gentleman's son might, and yet he will talk in his slangy way, as they do in the slums."

"He is as strong as a lion, is a thorough young sailor, knows New York perfectly, and, until I met him, had drifted about this village, a mere outcast and vagabond boy."

"He has pride, and I am sure a better education than I have, and yet he will not tell me a word about himself."

"He is honest, too, mother, and I have made him my second in command of the Boy Detectives' League, while he refused to accept a present from Colonel Ivey after we had captured the three robbers who meant to sack his home, and yet borrowed from the colonel enough money to purchase the yacht we went in after those pirates."

"He is, indeed, a strange boy, Will; but I have to thank you, my son, for keeping in the background as you did, though the leader, and not letting Colonel Ivey feel that he owed all to you," and Mrs. Raymond's voice quivered as she spoke.

"Mother?"

"Yes, my son."

"Why is it that you left Colonel Ivey as you did, for he certainly was a good, devoted husband, and neither Pearl nor myself could love our own father more than we did him."

"I cannot tell you my reasons, Will," was the low reply.

"It seems so strange, for from the day that he saw me searching for the gold-piece I had lost, and which he had found, he seemed so good to us all."

"He came to our humble home with me, and you seemed to like him so much; then he asked you to marry him, and we were all so happy in his New York home, and in the summer at his villa of Soldiers' Retreat on the Jersey shores."

"But, while he was gone West on business, you left him, and took Pearl and me with you; but you gave us no reason, and back to our former life of poverty we came, until I got this position through the kindness of Captain Ryan Daly, of the police."

"Now, mother, I know that Colonel Ivey has sought us far and wide, and yet I, to obey you,

when I see him, hide quickly, as though I had been guilty of some crime."

"Will you not tell Pearl and me why it is, mother, you wish to hide from him, why you left that noble man, when we were all so happy at his home?"

"My son, never ask me, for I have the best of reasons, yet reasons which neither you nor Pearl should know."

"I wish you still to avoid Colonel Ivey—"

"He has gone to Europe."

"Thank God!"

"He went after he called at the Police Station and tried to make Foxey take a big reward for what we did for him."

"The old servants told him that I was there, but he could find out nothing from Foxey, and so tried to pay him; but, as I said, Foxey refused pay, but accepted a loan, and with it bought the yacht we used, and which by Captain Daly's permission now belongs to our Detectives' League, as there is plenty for us to do on the water."

"We have named the yacht the Sea Ferret, and she's a beauty, mother, and some time I will come home in her, with my Boy Detective crew, and will give you and Pearl a long sail up the Sound."

"But, how will Foxey pay back the loan to Colonel Ivey?"

"Oh, we keep a fund in the League just for that, obtained from rewards and fees, each boy contributing so much from his share, and it will grow rapidly, for we are so glad to have a vessel belonging to us, we wish her paid for as soon as possible."

"And you like this life of a detective?" asked the mother, sadly.

"Mother, I have a liking for it, yes; and the men of the force say I possess a talent for it; still, had it been that Colonel Ivey was to have remained my step-father, I would much rather have carried out his desire and entered West Point or the Naval School."

"I only wish that you could do so, my son, and, if Captain Daly would only procure an appointment for you, I would gladly sell the diamonds Mr. Rossmore sent me in return for your great services to him, to live on while you were receiving your tuition."

"They would bring enough to support Pearl and myself for several years, while what I could earn by my paintings and fancy work, would go far toward giving your sister a good education."

"No, no, mother; neither Pearl nor myself should be fitted for grand places in life, with no money to uphold them."

"You are not in good health, and it is my duty and pleasure to support you and my little sister, and, if fortune favors me, Pearl shall be well educated, while if I win riches, so much the better for us all."

"But I must not aim too high now, and miss the mark, but be content with my present lot, and make you as happy as I can."

"Now let us go for a short row upon the waters," and a short while after the three were gliding over the rippling waters, the strong arms of the young detective sending the boat swiftly along.

CHAPTER V.

THE FLOWER GIRL.

IN a pleasant little flower store, on one of the fashionable up-town streets of New York City, sat a young girl the morning after the day that presents my hero to the reader.

It is a cosy little shop, hardly more than ten feet wide, with glass cases upon one side, filled with various designs for making up bouquets, and upon the other side is a counter, with vases of flowers upon it.

At the end, near the window, sits the single occupant of the shop, the young girl alluded to.

In the rear is a little room, used as a sitting room; and opening further back into the house is a stout door.

It is a pretty little shop, and its fair mistress is a very pretty little girl.

She is dressed in blue Jersey, that is most becoming to her fair complexion, a dark skirt, wears a silk kerchief about her neck, and in her golden hair nestle several exquisite roses.

She appears scarcely more than sixteen, and her lovely face, graceful form and sweet smile must win her many customers, especially among the young gentlemen.

Presently a customer enters, and she looks up from her writing at the desk near the window.

"Ah, captain!" she said in a surprised tone.

"Yes, Flora, it is none other than myself," was the reply.

"I supposed you were in Philadelphia, sir?"

"So I was; but I have just returned, and your

father sent his love, and said you were to take good care of the shop."

"No fear of that, sir; but are you not afraid to be seen here, sir?"

"Not in my present outfit, Flora; but any news?"

"These letters have come since you left, sir," and she handed him a package from the desk.

"Thank you; I will go into the back room and look them over, and, as I will be here for some little time, I will give you my address, to communicate with me should anything transpire of importance; but has no one been here trying to find out about your shop?"

"No, sir."

"Then you are wholly safe?"

"It seems so, sir."

"Why, I half suspected, after the discoveries that Wolf made, that your shop would be raided and the secret discovered; but I guess it is your sweet face that guards off suspicion."

"Many a pretty face, sir, hides a wicked heart, and where no one would suspect in Flora the Flower Girl one who was other than she appeared, neither would they, in looking at you, believe you to be Elegant Ed, the Captain of the Land Sharks," and the girl seemed to speak with a certain bitterness of tone that showed she felt her words keenly in all their truth.

"True, my sweet Flora, we all wear a mask in this world; but I must look over my letters," and so saying, Elegant Ed, whom the reader has met before, and now appearing the same superb-looking man, cynical, polished, graceful, entered the little room in the rear of the cosey shop of pretty Flora, the Girl Florist.

Hardly had he taken his seat in the single easy-chair in the room, and which he had drawn up to the window, when suddenly he glanced up, and through the glass partition before him beheld a customer enter the shop.

"Great God! it is that boy!" he cried in a startled tone, and seizing his letters, he hastily darted toward the heavy door in the rear, threw it open and disappeared in the hot-house.

The one whom he had seen enter the shop of the Flower Girl was Will Raymond, the young detective whom the reader was presented to in the foregoing chapter.

He was dressed in his natty suit of blue cloth, wore his soft hat, slouched over his forehead in a rakish way, but doffed it politely in salutation to the pretty Flower Girl, who turned to ask what he might wish in the way of a bouquet.

"Pardon me, miss, but I was coming up the street and thought that I saw Doctor Edgar come in here," said Will, whose Secret Service work had won for him the well deserved name of Wizard Will, The Boy Ferret.

It was a bold venture of the young detective in asking the question.

He had seen, some days before, Elegant Ed come out of that very flower store.

He had seen Wolf following him, and the two had talked together out upon the pavement.

Then Elegant Ed had sprung into a cab and driven away, while Wolf, in the garb of a preacher, and carrying a sachel of books, the boy had addressed, asking him who the gentlemanly appearing person was who had just driven away.

The pretended book-agent had given him a false name, and upon parting, the young detective had entered the flower store and asked who the gentleman was.

A man was there then, and he had seemed unwilling to answer the question put to him by Wizard Will, but had at last replied that the gentleman was his customer, Doctor Edgar.

Wizard Will was a shrewd youth, and he hastened away and looked up the names of the persons given him, to find that none such existed in history, as the book-agent had asserted the man was a distinguished general, or in the Directory.

Knowing that the chief of the Land Sharks was called Elegant Ed, and the names given him had been Edgar, Wizard Will put on his thinking cap and decided that the mysterious personage must be the outlaw captain.

Going out home, to his surprise, the pretended book-agent soon after put in his appearance, and from inside the door the brave boy heard what the man had to say to his mother and Pearl, and at once he stepped out and made him a prisoner, carried him to the village jail, to remain until the next day, when he called for him and found that the scamp had inveigled the constable and jailer to let him go.

Under these circumstances Wizard Will felt that the man he had suspected of being Elegant Ed was in reality none other, and more, that the man in the flower store was in league with the outlaws.

So Will put his boy spies to watch the flower store, while he went off on another service, and had discovered enough to convince him he was on the right track of the Land Sharks in commencing at the little shop up-town, where such a good business was done in selling flowers.

So he determined to take up the trail himself, and was on his way to the flower shop, when suddenly he descried a form ahead that caused him to start and mutter:

"That is Elegant Ed, Doctor Edgar, the King of Cards, or whatever else he may call himself—yes, and he goes into the flower store, too!"

A few moments after Wizard Will entered the shop, having decided to act boldly; but he was slightly taken aback at discovering, instead of the man whom he had before seen there, the pretty face and graceful form of Flora, the Flower Girl.

In answer to his inquiry, the girl smiled and said, little dreaming who the questioner was, and supposing, of course, as he used the name of the Land Sharks' captain, that he knew him:

"Yes, he is in the back room there, and you can step in and see him if you like."

"I thank you, miss; I will do so, for I have some important business to see him about, and I will be obliged if you make me up a handsome bouquet," and by this order Will hoped to detract the girl's attention from what might occur in the next room.

"At what price, sir?"

"Make me up two, please, for I wish one for my mother, and another for my sister, not too large, but very pretty, and of the choicest flowers."

"Say about three dollars each, sir?" asked Flora, with a sweet smile, that hid the fact that she was making two-thirds profit.

"Yes, please," Will answered, while he muttered as he walked toward the back door:

"If that man is Elegant Ed I don't care what she charges me."

Then he entered the rear room and closed the door behind him; but to his amazement he did not find there the man he sought.

CHAPTER VI.

THE BOY FERRET ON THE SCENT.

FLORA the Flower Girl had but carried out her instructions, in sending Wizard Will into the rear room to see the outlaw leader.

She had been placed in the shop by her father, who was one of the band, and she knew just what the men were who composed the League.

She had been told by her father to allow no one to enter the rear room and discover any secrets, but she knew that Elegant Ed was the chief and her father had referred to outsiders only.

The members of the band she knew by sight, as well as by name, and she was aware that the chief had outside spies who aided him in various ways.

Then she knew that he was known in polite society as Doctor Edwin Edgar, and dwelt not very far away in fashionable quarters.

When he was therefore asked for by a youth, whom she believed to be a messenger, from some reason, she directed him to the rear room.

As he had seen the chief enter he must therefore know him, and so she saw no danger in telling him where to find him, especially as he could deal with the youth, and certainly nothing of a suspicious nature could be discovered by a look around the room.

But the Flower Girl little knew what a dangerous person she was sending in to see the chief.

That worthy had espied the Boy Detective as he entered the shop, and as the reader has seen, hastily hid away to safer quarters.

He had been gone from the room but a couple of minutes, when Wizard Will entered it.

The boy seemed surprised to find no one there, and closing the door glanced about him.

There was but one means of exit, by which Elegant Ed had gone, and that was by the door leading into the hot-house.

So Will drew his pistol, opened the door and stepped in among the flowers.

The hot-house was long and narrow, with flowers upon either side, for a row of stands ran down the center, and two aisles leading to the other end.

There was no chance for any one to hide in there, and so Will walked to the other end.

Here was a double door, like a cellar cover, evidently leading into a vault where cut flowers were kept.

One side Will quickly threw up and glanced within.

It was a small vault, and there were vases, flower trays and some tools; these were all that he discovered.

The walls were of wood, and at one place nothing leant against it.

A close examination revealed to the shrewd boy that what there appeared to be a wall was really a door.

After various trials he managed to open it, and a tunnel-like way was presented.

It was some two feet and a half wide, by five in height; and was without doubt a tunnel cut through to some retreat.

Along on one side hung several lanterns upon pegs, and one peg was vacant, as though a lantern had just been taken therefrom.

Taking a lantern, Will drew a match from his pocket and lighted it, after which he boldly went on his voyage of discovery.

He carried his lantern in his left hand, held over his head, as he went along in a stooping posture, and in his right he held his revolver, a self-cocker, and ready for use at a second's notice.

On through the tunnel Wizard Will went, following the trail, until at last he came to a pair of steps, half a dozen in number.

A wooden floor was above, and pressing hard upon it, a trap was raised.

Then, standing upon the steps Will glanced around him.

He was in what appeared to be a kitchen, though the windows were tightly closed.

It seemed to be the rear room of some house upon another street than that upon which stood the Florist's shop.

Then Wizard Will paused, for brave as he was, utterly fearless in fact, he felt that he was taking desperate chances.

He was convinced that he had hit upon the lair of the Land Sharks, and he knew that Elegant Ed, if the man who had gone ahead of him was that personage, could not be elsewhere than there.

To attack the criminals in their den, he knew was reckless in the extreme.

What to do he hardly knew.

To return through the shop he knew would be to give his secret away to the girl, who he was assured was in league with them, and they could escape before he could call in aid.

To venture alone seemed certain death, and so he stood in a quandary.

"There must be a front door and I can get out that way, for I am sure the outlaws are on the top floor," he muttered.

"I think this is a large house on the street below the one the Florist's is on, and just back of it, for I have observed one there which was closed, and whose owner was said to be in Europe.

"Ah! now I recall it, I believe it is the Haunted House, where the family were murdered.

"I must find my way out, though, and I'll collect what police I can and raid it at once."

As he spoke he stepped one side, forgetting that the trap-door was upheld by his leg, and it went shut with a bang that resounded almost like the report of a cannon in that empty house.

Instantly he sprang to a closet for shelter, while, down the stairs, in bounds, he heard some one coming.

With a bound that shook the floor, the rapid descender of the padded stairs leaped to the last floor, the rattle of chains followed, bolts were drawn back, then came a bang, and all was still once more.

"There was but one, and he has escaped by the front door," and so saying Wizard Will sprang out of his hiding-place and seizing his lantern, for the closed house was perfectly dark, he ran out into the hall to the front.

All was still as death, and he stood like a statue listening for the slightest sound.

But only the rumble of a vehicle passing in the street reached his ears.

"I do believe the house is deserted, and the one who escaped is Elegant Ed," said Wizard Will to himself, and he moved forward and gazed at the door.

He saw that there was an inner and an outer one, the former being ajar.

Upon the knob, the dust was half brushed off, and the floor revealed the fact that the door had just been opened, and seemingly not for a long time before.

In the little vestibule there was also the same indication that the door was not used, for the dust was very deep, and there lay a rug rolled up at the bottom, as though to keep out all air, or to deaden sound from within.

Wizard Will gently opened the door and glanced through an aperture an inch wide, that he might locate the house.

This he did, by catching sight of a number directly opposite, and upon a house that was differently built from those on either side.

"I have a good landmark, and I think I am right about this being the Haunted House," he said.

Then he closed the door, and quietly made his way up-stairs.

He felt that he could put out his lantern and fly, if he was outnumbered, and make his escape by the front door, while he had perfect confidence in his deadly aim, should he be hotly pursued.

So on he went to the second floor and softly opened a door at the head of the stairs.

He beheld only a furnished room, dark, deserted and dusty.

He saw that the floor of the hall was padded, as were also the railing and the wall next to the adjoining house.

The second floor was searched and revealed nothing more than that the rooms were uninhabited, and had been for a long while.

Then the daring boy ascended to the third floor.

"Here is their nest," he muttered.

All was as silent as the grave, and a door was ajar.

That the one who had taken flight had come from that floor, Wizard Will was certain.

Pulling the door open he entered, lantern and revolver in hand.

A dim light pervaded the rooms, coming from a skylight overhead, which appeared to be covered with canvas.

The windows were closed, the carpet and walls were padded, and Wizard Will knew at a glance that he was in the den of the Land Sharks, for their former den had been just such a place, and he had been inveigled into it to serve as a tool for the outlaws to get a reward offered for a boy stolen years before, and which he was to represent himself to be.

"This is their den, but they have gone, that pretended Wolf having warned them that I would doubtless search the Florist's shop.

"Now to be sure that no one is here, and then I'll go back through the tunnel and see if that pretty girl is gone, too."

So saying, he hastily went from the sitting-room to the kitchen and sleeping-dormitory of the outlaws, and beheld every evidence that they had hastily taken their departure.

But no one was there, and he retraced his way down-stairs, locked and bolted the front doors, and returning to the back kitchen of the mansion, raised the trap-door, which seemed to be merely an ordinary way through which to descend into the cellar.

There he realized how cunningly planned was the entrance to the tunnel-way, for, but that he had left the door open, he would have believed it a part of the stone wall, as, closed, it certainly had that appearance, and no one entering the cellar would have believed that an exit was there through the solid masonry.

Closing it behind him, he walked rapidly back through the tunnel, and at last reached the hot-house.

Giving a sigh of relief he said, as he glanced at his watch:

"I have been gone just twenty minutes, and yet it seemed hours to me.

"Now to see if the pretty decoy has flown," and he softly entered the little room in the rear of the shop.

CHAPTER VII.

AN ASSASSIN FOILED.

THE pretty Flower Girl was still in the shop, and as Wizard Will glanced through the glass door he was glad to see that there were several customers within who had doubtless kept her busy while he was absent.

Her face was as serene as a May morn, and her smile to her customers was just as winning, so she evidently had had nothing to disturb her equanimity.

Realizing that she would naturally—believing him a pal of Elegant Ed—believe that they were busy in the rear room, and so not disturb them, Wizard Will concluded that she had not even know that they had left the little back parlor, or, even if she had entered there for some purpose, and found them gone, it could not awaken any suspicion on her part.

Feeling relieved by this argument, Will decided to enter the shop.

This he did as two of the customers left the place.

Flora greeted him with a smile, and asked:

"Did you see the gardener, sir?"

"Thank you; yes," and he doffed his hat politely.

"Your bouquets are almost finished, sir, and would have been if I had not been interrupted."

"I am in no hurry," was the quiet response, and Will picked up a floral catalogue, and leaning against the wall, began to look it over.

Presently the last customer left the shop, and Will was about to turn to the maiden, when suddenly a glass panel just behind him in the wall and level with his head, was lowered, and a face and hand were thrust through.

The hand held a pistol, and it was leveled directly at the head of the boy, which was not a foot from the muzzle.

The Flower Girl saw the act, and turning, seized a rope behind her, just as a mirror in front of Wizard Will revealed his danger.

A second longer, and Wizard Will would have been shot, and he realized it; but the rope the girl had seized connected with the panel, and drew it up again with a force that knocked up the hand of the assassin.

But his finger had already touched the trigger, and the report came while Wizard Will, partly stunned by the shock, staggered under it, his hat dropping to the floor with a large hole in it, torn by the powder, and the bullet barely escaping his head by the quarter of an inch.

In a moment Wizard Will had regained his composure, and drawing a revolver he had turned, bare-headed and savage-faced toward the wall.

But the panel was again closed, and no one could recognize just where it was, as there was a glass case there, apparently for flowers, though it was empty.

"Oh! are you wounded?" cried Flora springing toward Will.

"No, though it was a close miss, and I owe you my life, for I saw your act."

"You have nothing to thank me for, as I would not see you shot down like a dog, no matter what reason they had to get rid of you."

"Where is my intended assassin?" asked Will quietly.

"Far away by this time."

"Where was he when he fired the shot?"

"In the hallway next door, which is supposed to lead back into the hot-house; but is simply a space between the walls, and has a front door on the street, by which at night you can come into this shop—see?"

She pulled a knob as she spoke, and the glass case swung open, revealing a narrow hallway behind it, running to a street door.

It was in this case that the panel was set, so that one entering the hallway could see the interior of the shop and not be seen.

"That was an old man who attempted my life," said Will, after he had glanced at the secret entrance.

"Yes."

"Do you know him?"

"No, I did not recognize his face; but he must be one of the band, and yet he could not have known you, to wish to kill you, unless he is ordered to do so for some act you have done."

"Do you know who I am?"

"No."

"Suppose I tell you that I am a detective."

"You cannot frighten me with ghost stories," was the indifferent reply.

"Nor do I intend to try to do so, for, as I owe you my life I shall protect you, when, were it otherwise I would arrest you."

"Arrest me?" and the girl changed color.

"Yes, and see if I am not what I say."

"I came in this shop some time since, to ask who a gentleman was that I had just seen leave it."

"It was your father who was here then, and he only told me, after some conversation that it was Doctor Edgar."

"I had already asked a man outside, whom he had been talking with, who he was, and he had given me another name."

"This made me suspicious, and especially was I so, when I found the very man I had asked outside, at my own home a few hours after."

"He pretended to be a book-agent and a preacher; but I knew that he was not, and arresting him took him to the village jail."

"But he escaped, and I, as soon as I had completed some other work, decided that this was the haunt of the Land Sharks."

"Their chief, Elegant Ed, I have several times met, once when he called to me, as a vagabond boy almost that I was, to carry a letter to his lieutenant, he having seen in me a resemblance to a boy his gang had kidnapped long before, killed, and then wished to pass me off as the lost youngster."

"But he made a mistake in the boy, that's all, and had to change his quarters."

"Again I saw him out in the country, near my home, where he sought to kidnap me, but was frightened by my little sister, who was with me, and made him run for his life."

"A third time, though greatly changed by disguise, I saw him come out of this shop, and the fourth time, not an hour ago, I saw him enter it."

"I followed him in, asked for Doctor Edgar, and you, believing me one of the Sharks, sent me into the back room."

"But he had gone, doubtless flying at seeing me enter the shop."

"I am rather good at following a trail, and so I pursued Doctor Edgar, through the hothouse, the tunnel, the cellar into the mansion, and he escaped by the front door of the house which was, until very lately, the den of his band."

"I then came back here, to tell you of my discovery, arrest you as a stool-pigeon of the Land Sharks, and succeed for the third time in breaking up their lair, though the rascals escape me every time."

"Now I am confident that the man who fired at me was Elegant Ed, who must live near, ran home, put on a disguise, and came back to see what had occurred, for he evidently suspected that I had my men with me."

"Now you see that I have solved the riddle, and am really a detective," and Will smiled serenely as he gazed at the girl, who had stood like a statue, listening to what he said, a strange look of shame, fear and defiance commingled flitting over her features, as she realized that the Boy Detective had her wholly in his power.

"I have heard the men speak of a youth known as Wizard Will, the Boy Ferret; are you he?" she asked quickly, gazing straight into his face.

"I am, and you are my prisoner, miss," was the response of Wizard Will.

CHAPTER VIII.

WIZARD WILL'S GRATITUDE.

THE words did not even cause the Flower Girl to start, when Wizard Will told her that she was his prisoner.

She had expected it, for it had dawned upon her that he had cleverly caught her in a trap, by his simply asking for Doctor Edgar.

That Elegant Ed had escaped, she was very glad, as also that she had prevented the life of the boy from being taken by the intended assassin.

With Will she believed that it had been Elegant Ed himself, who, having escaped from the den had made his way to his quarters, and disguising himself had come to the shop to see how matters stood.

She felt angry with Elegant Ed for having attempted to take the life of the boy, in such a cowardly way, and especially in her shop, where the act would greatly compromise her.

For her own fate she felt indifference, for she knew little could be proven against her, as she had been so short a time in the shop, and left there by her father, who she could readily say had never told her the secret.

So she smiled as Will arrested her, by showing his badges of office, and laying his hand upon her shoulder, while she said:

"I submit, sir, but why I am arrested I do not know, as I am guilty of no crime."

"Guilty, or not, you shall go free, for I will not hold you, or take to prison one to whom I owe my life."

"That you are aware of the secrets of the Land Sharks so far as this being the entrance to their den, I am assured; but, miss, you did a good turn for me, and I shall prove that I am not ungrateful by saying that you can go on with your work in the shop here, and I will let the police believe that the outlaws had their entrance and exit by the front door of the house on the other street."

"The tunnel and secret entrances through the hot-house here, and the cellar of the house, can remain as they are, for not even the eyes of the police, I am sure, will ferret them out, and I will keep your secret, as to what you know, and thus return the service done me in saving my life."

"You are very good, sir, and I appreciate what you do for me, believe me, and I promise you that the Land Sharks, one and all, shall keep away from my shop, for having found an honest means of a generous support, I will stick to it."

"Now permit me to offer you these bouquets as a present from me?" and she took up the two which she had made for him, and which were very beautiful.

"But you will permit me to pay for them?"
 "Do not speak of it, or you will offend me."
 "We are friends now, and I will be glad to have you visit my shop whenever you wish, for this is to be my home, as I shall live here now."

"You have no help, have you?"
 "None, sir, I am all alone."
 "Take my advice and keep clear of those Land Sharks, for sooner or later they will get you behind iron bars."

"I will follow your advice, sir, I thank you," and as though anxious to get rid of so dangerous a person as was Wizard Will, the Flower Girl wrapped up the bouquets and handed them to him.

Thanking her again, Will took the flowers and left the shop.

Calling a passing cab he sprang in and told the driver to set him down at

"Captain Ryan Daly's police office."

Half an hour after the young detective entered the office of that famous officer, and found him alone, looking over a number of letters.

He was a splendid-looking fellow, with the appearance of a soldier, and well deserved the name that had been given him as

"The handsomest man on the force."

"Well, Will, what have you nosed out now?" he said, with a smile as the boy entered.

"These flowers, sir; are they not sweet?" slyly said Wizard Will, uncovering the bouquets.

"They are, indeed, and just what I would have selected for your mother and sister, so please present them with my compliments," laughed Captain Daly.

"I will, sir, for they are the ones for whom I intended them."

"A lovely but an expensive present."

"They were given to me."

"Ah! you have been bribed by that pretty Flower Girl to keep away from her shop, I'll wager, and pretty she is, for I looked in there yesterday; but I think she is innocent of knowing anything about the Land Sharks."

"Captain Daly, will you keep a secret I tell you?"

"Certainly, my boy, always."

"She is guilty."

"Hal you have discovered this much, you young Ferret?"

"Yes, sir, and more."

"She does know the den of the Sharks?"

"Yes, sir."

"And can she be bought to tell?"

"There is no need of it, sir."

"Wizard Will, you have found them?" eagerly said the captain.

"Yes, I have found their den, sir."

"Tell me all about it, my boy."

In his precise way, Wizard Will told his story, up to his return to the Florist's shop, and Captain Daly, after listening most attentively, eagerly asked:

"And you did not get a look at Elegant Ed again?"

"Yes, sir."

"Indeed! you saw him again?"

"Do you see this hole in my hat, sir?"

"It's a powder burn, by Jove!"

"Yes, sir, and a few grains of powder stung my scalp here, for the shot was well intended."

"I saw my intended assassin only an instant, in a glass, for he was behind me, and, in spite of a gray wig and false beard that he wore, I am confident that it was Elegant Ed; but he escaped and I have yet to find him."

"It seems like following a myth."

"No, sir, I'll find him yet; but I must tell you something more," and Will made known what he had done regarding the flower girl's release.

"Was it a case of love at first sight, Will?" asked Captain Daly, with a smile.

"No, sir, it was, in fact, gratitude for saving my life, and also because I believe I can find out something through her being free."

"How so?"

"I will take your men to-night to the Haunted Mansion, and that will show them the lair of the Land Sharks; but we will keep the secret of the tunnel from the cellar to the hot-house, and let the girl continue her work there, no one suspecting her."

"I will send Foxey up to try and hire out to her, and if she will not take him I will watch the place for Elegant Ed, for in some disguise he will certainly seek to visit the Flower Girl, and if we capture him we can afford to let her go free."

"Indeed we can, Will, and you can manage the plot as you deem best, and to-night you can take what men you wish to give the Haunted House an overhauling."

"It is certainly a wonder how ingeniously

that Elegant Ed hides his band; but I am willing to wager high that you yet run him to earth."

"I hope so, sir; but it is to be a secret about the Flower Girl?"

"Certainly."

"And she is not to be harmed?"

"All is in your hands, Will, to do as you deem best," was the reply of Captain Daly, who had perfect confidence in the genius, courage and discretion of the Boy Ferret.

CHAPTER IX.

THE YOUNG FERRETS.

NOTHING could be more devoid of suspicion than was the headquarters of "Captain Will Raymond, The Boy Wizard," as he was often called.

Aided and admired by Captain Daly, he had added to the secret service corps a great strength in gathering together a number of boys, ranging from ten to eighteen years of age, and than whom no better could be found as far as perfect knowledge of the city was concerned along with courage and cunning.

Will had "picked his men" and knew each one of them by heart, so to speak.

He had made known to them just what was expected of them, had drilled them as was needed, had them under perfect discipline, and paid and fed them well.

He knew how hard it would be for a body of boys to be congregated together as detectives, and the secret not be known, and he therefore, as in their being unknown was their strength, hit upon the plan of a Boys' Lodging House.

A suitable building was rented and fitted up, as needed, and an old policeman was made the major domo.

The first floor was used as a wareroom, the second as a dormitory for boys, at "10 cents a bed," and there the public lodging house ended.

Above the dormitory was a floor, where beds were supposed to be let to boys for 50 cents a night.

Few asked for accommodations at that price, and those were told they were too late to be accommodated.

Now just here it was that Toby the policeman had his office.

There was a desk, a register, a cot-bed, there and some few things more to make him comfortable.

He dressed as a civilian, and yet was an officer in special service.

He knew every boy who came to the house, kept the books, received the money, and was a terror to offenders.

Above his office no one went whom he did not know belonged to the Boy Detectives' League.

On that floor there was all to make them comfortable, for their beds were good and clean, they had a pleasant dining-room and kitchen, with books, games, and all to make them contented and feel that they were at home.

Thus, under the sign of "Boys' Home," the League of young ferrets had their secret quarters, unknown to more than half a dozen persons, besides themselves, in the city.

It was here that the young head and front of the League, Wizard Will, made his way after leaving Captain Daly.

"Well, Toby, is Foxey in?" he asked, as the policeman in attendance greeted him.

"Yes, Captain Will, he's just gone up-stairs," was the answer, and Will hastened on, after a kind word with Toby about his health, which caused the old man to remark to himself:

"Now that is a boy in years, but he's a man in acts, and a gentleman, to boot."

"I wish there were more youths like him."

Ascending to the top floor, Will entered the sitting-room of the Boy Ferrets, and a dozen youngsters sprang to their feet and greeted him politely and with pleasure at seeing him.

They were a motley set in appearance of face and clothing, for they would most all have been mistaken for beggars by a casual observer, though a reader of human nature would have discovered that something in the face of each which went to make up true worth, pluck and pride.

"Well, Cap'n Will, is thar anything up?" asked a youth, coming forward and greeting the young captain.

To judge of his age was no easy task, for he might be fourteen, and was well grown, and perhaps five years older.

His face had something of a comical look, was not exactly clean, seemed to be badly freckled, and his hair was short and worn banged all round his head.

He had a good form, wiry, sinewy, and his

broad shoulders indicated strength above the average.

Altogether he was an odd genius, and might be taken for a vagabond, but who, with slight changes in wardrobe and toilet, would look the gentleman's son.

Such was Foxey, the Vagabond, or Waif, for he owned up to either name and no other, as what other appellation he bore, if any, he never made known.

He was the right hand of his young captain, the lieutenant of the band, and all realized that he was the best Secret Service worker in the League and the equal of Wizard Will in certain ways.

"Yes, Foxey, I have a little work on hand for you," said Will, in answer to his question.

"Well, cap'n, I'm ready," was the prompt reply.

"Not as you are, for you must spruce up a little, though not too much, as I wish you to seek a situation."

"Ah! Bank cashier, superintendent fer a railroad, church deacon, or what, cap'n? Fer I'm handy at 'em all if I gits ther chance, 'specially in a bank."

"No, it is the more humble office of man-of-all-work in a flower store."

"I kin name ther Flower Girl."

"I expect so. Well, I wish you would go there and see if she does not wish a boy to help her."

"Tell her your own story to win her over, and offer to work for what she is willing to pay."

"I'll do it, cap'n; and I'm off now."

And ten minutes after, Foxey left the League quarters and wended his way up-town, accompanied by a comrade whom he had taken along for some peculiar reason of his own, and which will be made known in the next chapter.

CHAPTER X.

FOXLEY'S LITTLE GAME.

"Pug, does you see that pretty bouket sittin' on thet stand yonder, afore ther flower store?" asked Foxey, after he had arrived at a corner near the shop of Flora, the Flower Girl.

The one he addressed was his boy pard and the name by which he had called him was by no means unsuitable, for his face had a very close resemblance to a pug dog.

It was a cunning face, full of sense, mischief, and withal having a look of dignity that was amusing.

"I sees it," was the reply.

"Now I wants you to wait until I goes by ther shop, on t'other side o' ther street, and then you sneak up, give ther bouket ther grip and run; but, mind yer, I'm ter catch yer, and with a snortin' honesty o' expression ter take yer inter ther shop to ther gal, havin' rescooded her bouket, yer see?"

"I onderstands, Foxey."

"I'm ter say yer bried me ter let yer go, an' yer must, so as 'twon't be a lie I'm tellin', and then ther young leddy will offer me money, and I won't take nothin' fer doin' my duty, I'll tell her, and kinder wish I had a place to show how I could work."

"You see my little racket, Pug?"

"I does; but what'll be mine arter I am catched?" asked Pug, with an eye to Number One.

"I'll fix that all right," was the confident response, and with perfect trust in his leader Pug set out upon his pretended errand of theft.

He walked slyly up to the shop, appeared to be admiring the flowers, glanced up and down the street to see that no one was watching him, other than the one he wished to be on the look-out, and then slipped the large and elegant bouquet with a skill that seemed to indicate long practice in the art of thievery.

Instantly he walked off, and attempting to cross the street, Foxey came rushing upon him, seized him by the collar, took the bouquet from his grasp, and marched him in triumph toward the shop.

Seated near the window Flora, the Flower Girl had seen the act of Foxey, at the same time recognizing her bouquet, which she had not seen Pug take, however.

It was a bouquet made to order, and very beautiful, and she was awaiting the coming of the lady for it, who said she would call in her carriage, on her way back from down-town.

She met the boys at the door, and without giving her time to speak, Foxey said:

"Mornin', young miss! I've got this feller here fer yer, as I seen him snatch yer bouket and run fer it."

"You are very kind, my boy, and I will more

than thank you for what you have saved me, as that is a twenty-dollar bouquet.

"Oh, you little thief!" and Flora turned to Pug, who pretended to cry, and begged:

"Let me go, miss, please, and I won't do so no more, 'deed I won't!"

"He offered me half it would fetch if I'd let him go and run with him," put in Foxey.

"You are a good, honest boy, and here are a couple of dollars for you."

"Oh, no, miss! I couldn't take pay for being honest, bad as I need money; but don't you wish me to take this boy to give him to a cop, for if he don't get a lesson he'll grow up bad, miss, 'deed he will, and I doesn't wish to see him ruin't!"

"Here is an officer now," and a policeman entered as Flora spoke.

"A lady opposite, miss, sent her servant after me, as she said she had seen a boy steal a bouquet from you."

"Yes, officer, that is the young thief, and this honest boy captured him, having seen him steal it," said Flora.

"He looks like a tough one, too," was the officer's comment on Foxey, who answered in a hurt way:

"I looks tough, 'cause I is hungry and ragged, but I'm honest."

The officer looked dubious, and Flora said:

"I offered him money, and yet he refused it, but I must do something for him in return for his honest service for me."

"Never mind me, miss. I'll drop round to turn a penny as errand boy, maybe; but I'll go with the cop now to see him jug the kid."

Flora smiled, while the officer asked:

"You will be on hand in the morning, miss, to make a charge against this little thief, and I'll see that this young witness is there to appear against him."

"Oh, yes," said Flora, and then catching the officer's eye, he saw that she wished to speak with him, and he said:

"Write down your name and number for me, miss."

She wrote hastily:

"The poor boy looks hungry, and as he did not get away with my bouquet I do not care to prosecute, so let him go after a night in jail."

The officer saw what was written, nodded, and left, holding Pug by the collar, and with Foxey on the other side.

After turning a corner, Foxey saw that they would soon have a mob after them, and he asked in a tone that surprised the policeman:

"Officer, what is your precinct?"

"The —th, my boy."

"Well, I see that we are going to have followers, and it won't do for you to be seen to let us go here, so please call the next cab that passes, and I will tell you just who we are."

The tone, the manner of Foxey, was so different from what he had before spoken in, that the policeman was amazed.

"Who are you?" he asked.

"Never mind now; call that cab!"

It came like an order, and instinctively the officer obeyed, as a dozen or more began to press around them, having scented an arrest, and asking a score of questions as to the crime committed.

As the cab rolled away with the three inside, Foxey said:

"We are members of Wizard Will's League of Boy Detectives, and it is urgent that I find out a mystery connected with that Florist's, so I put up the job with Pug here to snatch the flowers, let me catch him, and then return there myself and hunt work."

"Here are my badges of office, and Pug you show yours."

As he spoke, Foxey threw open his jacket and displayed two badges that he wore, Pug also showing his silver shield.

"Well, if you don't beat all I ever saw."

"I've wanted to run across Wizard Will and his boys, for I've heard he was a daisy, and here are two of 'em."

"You are assured now that we are all right?"

"Certain; but what is your name?"

"Foxey."

"Ah! you are lieutenant of the gang?"

"Yes."

"So it was told us; but I hain't no money to pay this cab."

"I have, and keep the change to drink my health," and Foxey handed over a five-dollar bill with the air of a bank cashier.

The vehicle was then brought to a stop, and the policeman was driven back to his beat, Pug starting back to headquarters, and Foxey returning to seek employment with Flora, the Flower Girl.

CHAPTER XI.

UNDER FALSE COLORS.

WHEN Foxey approached the shop of the Flower Girl, he put on once more his assumed air of injured innocence.

He shuffled into the store, and glancing up, Flora saw him and said quickly:

"Come in, my boy, for you are just in time to go on an errand for me."

Foxey smiled, and receiving a bouquet with an address upon it, he started upon an errand, carrying a receipted bill in his pocket.

"Now I will see if he is honest, for I risk the return of that money to find out, and I hope he is, for he can help me here in many ways."

An hour passed, and Foxey returned, carrying the money for the flowers, twelve dollars, held fast in his fist.

"You are an honest boy, and I do wish you would accept some money from me."

"Not for catchin' ther crooked kid, miss, though I'll take a ten piece for the errand, if you think it's wu'th it."

"It is worth a quarter, for I would have to pay that to a messenger boy; but what do you do for a living?"

"All I kin git ter do, miss."

"Where are your parents?"

"I hain't none."

"And friends?"

"I'm a poor waif, miss, a vagabond, and if you'd let me work for you for my eatin' I'd be glad to."

"I will hire you at three dollars a week, and you can get your meals here, for I do my own cooking, and you can have a cot and sleep in the shop, if you are willing to."

"I'll be too glad to, miss."

"But you must accept a little present from me to start with."

"I don't need no money."

"But you must spruce up to be a flower messenger boy, and I'll give you this ten-dollar bill to go and rig yourself out in a suit."

"Charge it ag'in me, miss."

"If you wish it."

"I does; but I won't know myself in store-clothes," and Foxey gave a chuckle of delight.

Taking the bill, he started on his mission; but instead of making his way to a clothing store, he went directly to the League Headquarters, and hastily put on a good suit of his own.

Then he wrote a note for Wizard Will, which read:

"I've been engaged as an errand boy in the shop, and am to eat and sleep there."

"Will report everything promptly."

This note he dispatched by one of the boys in search of Wizard Will, and then started upon his return to his place of employment.

Hardly had he left the shop, however, when there entered a tall form, wearing a military-looking hat, and what appeared to be an undress uniform.

He had heavy side-whiskers, and mustache, and looked like an army officer of high rank.

"Well, Flo, how is my disguise?" he asked, quietly, as the young girl came forward to wait upon him.

She started at the question and said quickly:

"Captain Ed, I did not know you; but, oh! how rash you were to day to attempt to kill that poor boy in my shop."

"Poor boy, indeed! do you know who he is?"

"Yes, sir."

"And why he came here?"

"I do."

"And yet you call him poor boy, and saved his life."

"Captain Ed—"

"Sh!"

"I should say Doctor Edgar, I will tell you just how all that occurred."

"The boy came here and said pleasantly that he had just seen you enter."

"Ha! what name did he give me?"

"Doctor Edgar, and naturally I supposed he was one of your men, by his asking for you, and I told him he would find you in the back room."

"I was busy with customers, and supposed you were in there talking together the half-hour he was away, when to my surprise he told me he was a detective, had tracked you to the Haunted House, and you had escaped."

"Then he arrested me, and you came in through the hallway and made an attempt to kill him."

"Who said that I did it?"

"He knew you, as I did, under your disguise as an old man, for he saw you in the glass."

"And you thwarted me, I am now glad to say."

"As I am; for what would have become of me had he been murdered here?"

"For saving his life, as he frankly admitted, he told me to remain here and that he would keep my secret, and that no one should know about the secret entrance through the hothouse."

"Then he left?"

"Yes."

"And will raid the mansion, doubtless, to-night?"

"Doubtless."

"He will find nothing."

"You are fortunate; but your house will be seized and confiscated."

"It may be seized, but I sold it for cash yesterday, and the deeds are all right, while I have the money."

"You are a smart man, Captain Ed."

"I am no fool; but about this boy?"

"Well?"

"I wish I could get him into my power."

"I do not believe that you can."

"I will try, for, with him alive, I am not safe; and you, Flora, must help me."

"I will do what I can, as you know, Doctor Edgar," was the quiet reply; and then the young girl told of the stealing of her bouquet, and how she had engaged the honest boy who had captured him to serve her.

"Better have engaged the thief."

"No, indeed; for I could not trust him, and the honest boy I could."

"When will he come?"

"Soon; for he has gone to fix himself up."

"Well, see what you can do with him, and if he can be trusted he may help me, too, for I was going to suggest that you keep a boy here."

"Now I must be off; but if aught turns up of importance, and goes wrong, send your messenger to me, saying simply, Come."

"Thank you," and Elegant Ed left the shop, and half an hour after Foxey put in his appearance, assuming a very awkward air in his new rig, and saying in his quaint way, as he saw Flora gazing at him, a smile upon her face:

"These is my store clo'se, miss, and I feels as if I'd been put in 'em ter be prayed fer by the parson."

Flora laughed, but said pleasantly:

"You are not so bad-looking after all, Foxey, when you are dressed up."

"It's the clo'se, miss, for you know, 'fine feathers makes fine birds.'"

"Well, I am glad to have you here to help me, and we shall get along famously, I know."

So Foxey was installed in his new quarters, the young girl little dreaming that he was sailing under false colors.

As he was closing up the shop that night, Flora came out of her room all dressed up to go out.

"Foxey, I have to go out for awhile, and I leave you here; but if you wish to go out too, you can do so, and I will show you just how to get in," and she showed him a secret spring upon the outer door.

"I may take a little walk after awhile, miss," he said quietly, and he went on with his work cleaning up the shop, while she passed on out.

But Foxey was a remarkably keen observer, and he discovered that though she had disappeared from view, her shadow, cast by a street lamp, still fell upon the pavement.

He kept on with his sweeping mechanically, and yet his eyes were upon the shadow.

He saw it move toward the shop, the other side of the door, the arms were put out, and then the form disappeared.

Wizard Will had told Foxey of the secret hall and panel-door, the latter leading into the shop, and having the small panel-window in the glass case.

"She's gone to watch me," muttered Foxey, "and now I'll show her I'm honest."

So he did his work thoroughly, went about with a dust-brush, and suddenly came upon the money-box, open, on the back shelf.

"Lordy! she's done left all her money out, and I does hope she knows jist what is in it, fer if there was any missin', she'd s'pect me, fer she don't know me good yit."

"I'll jist put it out o' sight in a safe place until she gits back."

"Oh, goodness! she have left her diamint ring in the box, too."

"Lordy, me boy, you has big wealth in your grip jist now, and I'm so glad you is honest, or you might turn bank cashier and skip up to Canada."

He spoke aloud, for he had seen the panel window move, and knew that every word he uttered had been heard, every action seen.

Closing the box, he turned the key in, placed it in a drawer and locked this, too.

Then, having finished his work, he said:

"I guesses I'll step out fer a leetle walk, fer ther good o' my health."

A moment after he came out of the shop and strolled leisurely down the street to a cellarway, into which he darted.

A short while after Flora came out, and passed within a few feet of the boy, when a man, all muffled up, met her.

"Ah! my pretty Flower Girl, which way?" he asked quickly, halting her, while Foxey muttered:

"I'm in luck ter-night."

"Why, doctor! I did not know you in your new disguise," said the girl in a low tone; but it reached the ears of Foxey.

"I have to change my colors often, fair Flora; but I have just passed the Haunted Homestead."

"Well?"

"That imp of Satan is there with a gang of police, raiding the place."

"They will find no one."

"True, and do lit le good, for I have sold the place, as I told you; but they'll get the booty, which I meant to remove to-morrow."

"Better lose your booty than your life."

"You are right; but any letters, or anything new?"

"No, captain."

"I wish you could run over to Philadelphia for me, Flora."

"I cannot, for I dare not just now neglect my business."

"Can you not send some one of your agents?"

"It is something I fear to trust them with, as they must know too much of a secret to accomplish what I wish."

"How about that honest boy of yours?"

"How do you mean?"

"Can he not keep the shop?"

"I would trust him with all I have; but I cannot leave just now."

"Could he go?"

"If it is a wrong that he will have to do, you cannot expect him to do it, for he is too true to himself to commit a sin."

"Bah!"

"I mean it, for I tempted him to-night, leaving him in the shop with several hundred dollars left out especially, and my diamond ring, and he put all carefully away."

"How do you know?"

"I saw him through the secret window."

"Ah! he is too honest to live long," sneered the man.

"He is honest at heart, and I respect him for it, and nothing will tempt him."

"Let me offer him a few hundreds and I'll fetch him."

"If you do, you'll have him upon you with the police at his back."

"Then why do you keep him?"

"Because I am delighted to find one I can trust to have near me."

"You are a fool, Flora, and because you did not see him take your money to-night, it was because he did not have enough to tempt him."

"Try him again, and with a larger sum and more diamonds, and my word for it he'll skip with them."

"I'm not afraid to try him, for, if he did steal them, I could put a bullet in him if he attempted to leave the shop with them; but I would not hesitate to leave all out and not watch him."

"Don't be so silly as to try it."

"I will, to show that I am not mistaken in my judgment of him."

"You'll suffer for it, mark my words; but if anything occurs, or any letters come, send them to me please."

"Now I must be off," and the two separated.

While Foxey crawled out of his retreat a few moments after, just as a policeman came in view.

It was the same officer who had arrested Pug in the morning.

"Ho, Cap'n Cop, I've got a bonanza fer yer."

"Come with me as quick as yer dignity will let yer travel, as Elegant Ed are but a square ahead o' yer," and Foxey and the officer went off at a rapid pace on the track of the outlaw chief of the Land Sharks.

CHAPTER XII.

FOXLEY WRITES A LETTER.

It was the following day, after the scene just narrated, that Wizard Will went as was his wont to the office of his chief, Captain Ryan Daly.

"I'm glad to see you, Will, for I have had a communication from our chief of the Secret Service, in which he speaks most highly of you and your boys, and all the precinct captains give you a good send-off and congratulate me

upon the success I made in starting your Boys' League of Detectives.

"Now you are the originator, and deserve the credit, and I but aided you in carrying it out."

"You have been to me, sir, what money is to the inventor, the mainspring."

"Well put, Will; but what of your raid last night?"

"We entered the mansion, sir, and searched it from cellar to garret, and not one of the officers found the secret door in the cellar wall, as I felt that they would not."

"We however got a quantity of stolen booty, which they had not had time to remove, some burglar's tools and various other things."

"Good, and you must notify the agent or the owner, that his house has been the resort of thieves, and that he had better rent it."

"Captain Daly, do you know who is the owner of that house?"

"A young man now in Europe, became the heir; but he is rich enough not to care for the income from renting it, and so lets it go."

"You are wrong, sir."

"How mean you?"

"The house was left to an heir, a young man in Europe, and he disposed of it to a New York man, who let it remain idle for his own purpose."

"That man was Doctor Edgar—"

"Elegant Ed?"

"Yes, sir."

"Then we get his place for—"

"No, sir, for he was shrewd enough to sell it for a fair cash price only day before yesterday, to a rich man here in town."

"We are foiled, by Jove!"

"Yes, sir, for the deeds are all right, and the transfer made direct from Edwin Edgar to Calhoun Clinton, and the money paid."

"And Edwin Edgar, Doctor Edgar, Elegant Ed, the King of Cards, and the King of Crooks are one and the same person?"

"Yes, sir."

"We must find them, Will."

"Yes, all of them," and Will smiled, and added:

"The lot in which stands the Florist's shop also belonged to Elegant Ed, for the land ran right through from street to street; but the new owner does not know the secret of the tunnel, and, getting a good rent for his shop, as it is leased for a year yet, he will not build upon the lot."

"You've been nosing around pretty well, Will," and Captain Daly held out his hand to take a letter which an attendant brought in, but said:

"It is for you, Will."

"From Foxey: now for news," and Wizard Will tore open the envelope, and read aloud:

"On duty in the Flower Gal's store."

"DEAR CAPTAIN BILLY:—"

"I takes my pen in my grip ter say that I hev got employment here, and it's a bang up place."

"I is kinder office clerk, errand boy, sweeper out and cash child all combined in one."

"I has a fold up cot fer a bed, and it's prime."

"I foller scriptur' twice a day, 'Takes up my bed and walks.'"

"It goes inter a closet and I goes ter work."

"Then my housekeepin's done afore breakfast."

"I was tempted by the Flower Gal last night, ter see if I were honest; but you gave me ther panel window rakkit and I know'd she hed her pretty eye on me, and I acted accordin'."

"Then I went out fer a walk, dodged into a cellarway, and good luck fetched the Flower Gal and Elegant Ed ter meet right there near me, and I heard what they said as ter me."

"I guesses I'll be sent on an errand ter Ed some time soon, and then I'll know his dive and post yer; but my eyes will be open day and night fer all that may turn up."

Your Fard,

Here instead of the name, Foxey had drawn a clever sketch of a fox as an autograph.

Captain Daly laughed heartily at the letter of the strange youth, and said:

"You will yet solve the problem, Will, my word for it, for your allies are only second to yourself in the talents that Secret Service men require."

"You had better keep pretty near— What, a P. S. you say?"

"Yes, sir, on the other side of the page."

"Read it."

"I fergot ter say that when I came out o' my hidin'-place, one police cop come along, and I started with him on the dead run arter Eddy, but we didn't find him."

"Better luck next time."

"Foxey means business," the captain said.

"He does indeed, sir," and as he did not expect to be able to go out home at night, on account of his duties, Will obtained leave for a

few hours and ran out to the cottage to see his mother and sister, and also to submit to them an idea he had of a new disguise he wished to assume.

CHAPTER XIII.

KIDNAPPED.

SEVERAL days passed away, and no new developments were made regarding the interest which Flora the Flower Girl held in the outlaw band.

Foxey had been on the alert, and yet as busy as a beaver in the interests of his pretty employer.

She, in turn, seemed to have taken a great fancy to the boy, and trusted him implicitly.

She had sent him on numerous errands, but not once to the home of Doctor Edgar.

That worthy, in one disguise and another, was constantly turning up in the shop, and the keen sense of penetration which he possessed, caused Foxey to recognize him each time.

Now he came in with blonde whiskers and wig, eye-glasses and the attire of a dude.

Then he would appear to be a German professor, with spectacles, long beard and a clerical looking suit of clothes.

Again he came in with pea-jacket, smooth face, skillfully reddened with rouge, a wig of short hair, and the look of a stout sailor, for he had padded his body out until he appeared to be a very fat man.

"I'm onder him," muttered Foxey to himself, as he came in in the last disguise.

"If it wasn't for his little peccoliarities, I'd not have tumbled; but I've got his every gesture down fine as silk and knows him."

As well as he could Foxey would catch a word each time, and he knew that the man seemed anxious regarding some letters he seemed to expect, and his mail, under assumed names was addressed to the Flower Girl's care.

One night, about closing time there came a letter into the shop by messenger for Flora.

It was Saturday night, and as was her wont, she was counting up her week's receipts, and she had her cash drawer before her.

In her own room she had a secret drawer in the wall where she kept her valuables, and her money, and she was seated near this when Foxey brought the letter in to her.

She read it and hastily said:

"Foxey, I have to go out, to be gone several hours, so I leave you in charge."

"Put this money and things back where they belong, but first count the week's receipts, and then all we have in hand."

"Yes, Miss Flo," and Foxey pricked up his ears like a pony scenting danger.

"I guesses I'll see whar she goes," he muttered, and, as Flora left the shop, a few moments after, he slipped to the door and watched her.

He saw her hail a passing cab and spring into it, and it went on at a swift pace, as far as he could see it.

"She hain't watchin' me—that's sure; but somebody may be for a fact," was his cautious whisper to himself.

Having finished his work and shut up the shop, he sat down to the task left for him, that of counting the money.

There were bills there to a considerable amount, ranging up to a thousand dollars, and quite a sum as the week's receipts, for the pretty face of Flora drew a large custom from young men, who were wont to pay liberally for flowers, and even the smallest buttonhole bouquet.

Then there were several valuable rings, a pair of bracelets and a gold locket, containing a face that was that of a very beautiful woman, and which Foxey seemed to recognize as one he had known before.

"I wonder who it is, for I know her," he murmured.

Then he counted over the money, tied it up in bundles, marking the amount on each, and sat with the drawer in his lap.

Somehow he felt drowsy, and said:

"Them flowers smell awful powerful to-night and 'most make me sick."

"I'll have to get a breath of fresh air."

Poor Foxey did not observe a panel in the wall open, one that looked from the secret hall, directly into the private room of the flower girl, where the youth sat, the treasure drawer upon his lap, and his hand holding the locket.

He did not see a hand and face in that open secret panel, and in the former an india-rubber atomizer, upon which every pressure threw a spray of chloroform into the room.

This it was, and not the scent of the flowers that overcame the boy.

Gradually he became more drowsy, and, in

attempting to shake off the feeling and rise, to go out, he dropped from his chair upon the floor, his senses overcome by the drug.

Then the panel window was closed, a door in which it was set, and which appeared to be a book-case, swung open and two men stepped into the room.

In an instant Foxey was gagged, bound, muffled up, borne from the room into the hallway, and thence into a carriage in waiting, which at once drove swiftly away.

CHAPTER XIV.

WOLF MAKES A MOVE.

I WILL now ask my reader to accompany me back to Philadelphia, and introduce him into the lair of the Land Sharks, who had fled to that city for refuge.

Their chief seemed to have understood the workings of that city, as well as he did the metropolis, and he readily secured secret rooms there for his men.

Unknown to Philadelphia police and detectives, the Land Sharks found it comparatively easy work to enter upon their career of robbery and crime, and Wolf, who was their commander, in the absence of Elegant Ed had proved that they were getting rich fast.

One night he came into the den, and was greeted with sullen politeness by the men, who had neither the love, or respect for him that they had for Elegant Ed.

Fear him they did, for he was a hard taskmaster, cunning, knew all of their secrets, from having been one of them, and when aroused, was a desperate and dangerous man.

"Men, I have the result of our sales, here, and they sum up well," said Wolf, seating himself at a table, while the men gathered about him.

Taking out a paper he continued, as he read from it:

"Our booty amounted to so much, and you can glance down the bill at your leisure and note just the articles sold.

"Our pickpocket income has been also good, and, all counted, there is a little over five hundred dollars easy, with double that sum for myself as lieutenant, and double my amount for the captain, which brings him nearly twenty-five hundred dollars.

"Now there is a little matter on hand that I have got to work up.

"It's a bank, in a town some distance from here, and I must go there to look over the field, for it is a big bonanza if taken safely.

"You, Tiger, will be in command until my return, and here is the money, which you can divide among the men."

So saying Wolf took his own share, and that of Captain Ed, and left the rooms.

A carriage was in waiting for him, and he gave the man an order to drive to the Revere House.

Arriving there he looked over the register, and finding a name he searched for sent up his card, and soon after followed it himself.

The gentleman who arose at his entrance was the one whom the reader has seen on the train, the night of the accident.

"Ah, Detective Wolf, I am glad to see you, and, as you see, I came up to the city as soon as I received your telegram."

"I telegraphed, Mr. Lomax, because it is in my power to get the man you wish into your hands."

"I shall certainly be most glad of this."

"You live on, or near the coast, I believe?"

"I live not far from the shores of the Chesapeake Bay."

"I have a friend who is acquainted with the man you seek, and he tells me that he could get him to go on a yacht cruise with him."

"So it struck me as a good idea for me to charter a small yacht, as I am a good sailor, have my friend invite your man for a cruise, and let them sail down the coast into the Chesapeake; to a landing which you might designate, where you can have an office to arrest him."

"I am determined to force the man to a personal conflict with me, Mr. Wolf, and that is my only motive."

"It must be his life or mine, for it is revenge that I seek."

"Then you think my idea a good one?"

"Certainly, as dueling is not allowed North, and on the Virginia shore it would pass unnoticed."

"You will need money for the charter of the yacht, payment of the crew and other contingent expenses?"

"Yes, Mr. Lomax."

"Will two thousand be sufficient?"

"More than sufficient, sir; but I will return what is not needed."

"I will give you my check for it, and they will pay it at the office; but where is this man now?"

"In New York."

"Are you sure?"

"Yes, sir, for I know his address."

"Well, write me when you sail, and about what time to expect you at Norfolk, where I will meet you, and then we will sail to some point where we can have a meeting that can end but one way," and Mr. Kent Lomax, the Maryland planter, looked very stern, and determined on revenge.

"I will telegraph you fully, sir, and nothing that will be compromising," and Wolf soon after took his departure, got the check cashed at the hotel office, and caught the midnight train for New York.

"Any one seeing the man, in the disguise which he had put on, get upon the train, would never have recognized in him the designing rascal, the lieutenant of the Land Sharks, for gold-rimmed spectacles, a red wig, stylish suit and high hat, gave him the appearance of a well-to-do merchant, wholly at peace with the world and himself."

CHAPTER XV.

FLORA'S FAITH.

It was rather late when Flora, the Flower Girl returned home.

She let herself into her shop with her pass-key, and when she entered the little room she called her own, she started back with the exclamation:

"These flowers are overpowering to-night with their perfume."

Then she glanced about her, raised the light, and a cry escaped her lips.

Her eyes had fallen upon her treasure-drawer lying upon the floor, and it was empty.

"What! am I deceived in that boy after all?" and she darted into the little alcove in the shop where Foxey was wont to sleep.

It was empty, and the little cot had not been spread for the night.

"Yes, he has gone, and after all I am deceived."

"Why, sooner would I have doubted myself than that boy."

"Let me see what he has taken with him."

The contents of the drawer seemed to be all, but all that it had contained had been taken.

His old clothes remained hanging on the peg, his old hat, and a cry escaped from the girl's lips as she said:

"Ha! he has not gone bareheaded! no, no; he has not done that, and my idea is that he has been lured outside, seized, perhaps killed, and that robbers have done this."

"Oh! but I will find them out, cost what it may, if only to prove my trust in that boy was not without reason, for the money and jewelry I can replace."

So saying she took a candle and examined every nook and corner.

The door leading into the hot-house was locked so no one could possibly be in there, or have come that way.

Knowing the secret panel in the wall, opening from her room into the hall, she examined it carefully.

"Ah! I have it now, for here are finger marks in the dust and it has been lately opened."

Touching a spring the door flew open and her foot touched something which she stooped and picked up.

It was a roll of bills, bound around with quite a wide piece of paper that was pinned.

Upon it was written:

"Week's receipts, Two Hundred & Ten Dols. Counted by Foxey."

"These words prove the poor boy's innocence, for he had counted the money, as I asked him to do, and tied it up."

"He did not know of that secret panel, and therefore could not have opened it."

"No, he was watched through it, and the robber or robbers, saw the money and took it, dropping this bundle."

"Poor Foxey doubtless fought hard and was murdered, I fear, and they have carried away his body to throw it into the river."

"But that opened panel proves that those who did the deed knew the secret."

"Ha! do I dare suspect Captain Ed?"

"No, no, he is rich, very rich, and would not rob a poor girl."

"Bah! he robs poor and rich alike, and he might rob me as well."

"Now I think it over, I believe he is the guilty one, for he attempted a boy's life once, and

he has done this to kill Foxey, carry his body away, and make me believe that he was not as honest as I thought, and ran off with my money and jewelry."

"No, no, my poor Foxey, I do not believe you are guilty, and if you have been foully dealt with I will avenge you."

The expression upon the face of the young girl proved that she meant all she said.

Having made up her mind as to the course she would pursue, Flora was one to settle down to calmness, and she very quietly managed to retire for the night, for it had passed the hour of midnight some time before. In the morning she arose early, and going into the adjoining room, which was used as a kitchen and eating-room together, she made the fire in the little stove, a service that Foxey had done for her during his stay there, and in fact he had proven himself quite an accomplished cook on several occasions when Flora was detained in the shop.

She sighed as she thought of the boy, and what might have been his fate, and that stern look of resolution came again over her face.

After eating breakfast, clipping fresh flowers, and attending to certain necessary orders, Flora was about to go out, when a coupe drove up and a young lady got out and tripped into the shop.

The vehicle was a stylish one, drawn by a spirited horse, and a driver in livery sat on the box.

The young lady was veiled, but not so much as to hide a handsome face, while she was dressed with elegant refinement.

"I would like a number of long-stemmed flowers immediately, if you please, miss, and that your errand boy should deliver them at once," said the young lady in a low, sweet tone.

"I can give you the flowers, miss, for I have just cut some, but I am sorry to say my boy mysteriously disappeared last night, and I shall have to ask you to wait until I can go after a messenger."

"In that case I will carry them myself, but how provoking to have your boy desert you as he has done."

"I do not think he did so intentionally, miss, in fact I know it, for he was an honest, noble little fellow."

"You think he was enticed away?" and the visitor seemed to take quite an interest in the missing Foxey.

"No, I think, and fear that he has met with some sad end."

"Indeed!"

"I was called away by a note I received near closing hour, telling me to go and meet a person in the upper part of town, and I did so, to find there a telegram saying he could not come, so I returned home to find my boy gone."

"I had left him to count up my money, and with much more, and some jewelry in his possession, among which was a miniature likeness of my mother in a gold locket, and these had also disappeared."

"Do you not suspect that he robbed you and fled?"

"The thought did come into my mind, but I found evidence to the contrary, and I am confident that he was surprised while counting my money, and that it was taken and he was kidnapped, or perhaps worse—killed, and his body carried off and thrown into the river."

"You interest me deeply in this boy, and I assure you I would like to aid you to discover the truth, so command me, if I can serve you, and my purse is at your service if you need money," and the young lady seemed quite wrought up with what Flora had told her.

"Thank you, miss, but I have plenty of money, though you are very kind indeed."

"Do you have no suspicion of who may have done this crime?"

"I have a suspicion, yes, of one who told me the boy would deceive me, and not prove honest, and I think he wished me to get rid of him; but as I would not, he may have done so."

"If I am wrong, I am sorry to have misjudged the one I have suspicion of; but I shall find out, that I am sworn to."

"And I hope you may discover all is not as bad as you feared. Ah! these are beautiful flowers—and take your price out of this bill, please," and the lady extended a twenty-dollar note.

Flora took her pay, gave back the change, and the young lady, again expressing her interest regarding Foxey's mysterious disappearance, departed, promising to see the Flower Girl again.

As soon as she left another visitor entered.

It was Elegant Ed in his disguise of Doctor Edgar.

CHAPTER XVI.

DIAMOND CUT DIAMOND.

"WELL, sweet Flora, you look angry."
 "What has disturbed you this morning?" and Elegant Ed leant on the counter and gazed into the face of Flora the Flower Girl.
 "I feel sad, Doctor Edgar," was the answer, as the young girl continued her work.
 "And why sad, Flora, for you have no lovers that I have ever been able to discover, or—rather, I am wrong, you have lovers by the score, but no loves, so no one could have trifled with your heart."
 "The boy is gone, doctor."
 "What boy?"
 "Foxey."
 "Ah! the one you had here to help you?"
 "Yes," and Flora looked straight into the eyes of the man as she spoke.
 But it did not change color, or show the slightest evidence of guilt.
 "I told you so, fair Flora."
 "You told me that he would rob me."
 "I did."
 "Well, he did not rob me."
 "No?"
 "No, and yet he went off."
 "Strange."
 "And I missed my money and my jewelry."
 "And you do not believe that he robbed you?"
 "I know that he did not."
 "I would suspect that he did."
 "No, he was honest, and he was here in charge with my money and all, and some one came here, kidnapped the boy and robbed me."
 "Ah, Flora, you do not wish to have your faith shaken in that boy; but my word for it, that he robbed you and fled."
 "He did no such thing."
 "Then who do you suspect?"
 "I did suspect you."
 A frown crossed the face of the man, and he said angrily:
 "Beware, girl, for not even a pretty woman trifles with me."
 Flora looked him squarely in the face, and answered slowly and very distinctly:
 "I said that I did suspect you, that I believed you had kidnapped the boy to get him out of the way, and prove that my trust in his honesty was without reason."
 "I did not believe that you would rob me, no, but suspected that your hirelings had; but I have watched you closely, and I cannot read guilt in your face."
 "As to your not allowing even a pretty woman to trifle with you, let me say that I do not fear you."
 "You know me simply as the daughter of one of your gang, and, excepting that I have been a stool-pigeon to keep the police off your tracks, you can say nothing against me, for, what I am you know not."
 "But I know you, Doctor Edgar, as a robber, highwayman, gambler, counterfeiter, and a murderer!"
 "By Heaven! you defy me," the man hissed between his shut teeth, his face having become livid.
 "I will not submit to threats, sir, and as we know each other, act the gentleman you appear when in my company."
 "Would you betray me?"
 "Oh, no, I am no traitress, I simply will not be frightened by you, and I ask you if you kidnapped that boy?"
 "No."
 "Did you have it done?"
 "No."
 "Do you know who did?"
 "No."
 "Do you know anything about him?"
 "Not a word."
 "You wish me to believe you?"
 "Yes, for what motive had I?"
 "None that I can see, excepting your hatred of him because he was honest."
 "Bah! the boy was nothing to me, and I have not yet taken to killing women or children."
 "You tried to kill that Boy Detective, Wizard Will, right before my face, and he was scarcely older than Foxey."
 "Well, I know nothing about the boy, and care less."
 "Now give me my mail; and you have shown such an ugly humor toward me, I will call as seldom as possible."
 "Suit yourself, sir."
 "I did hope that you cared something for me."
 "I acknowledged your position as chief of the band of which my father was a member; that is all."

"And nothing more?"
 "What else do you wish?"
 "Your love."
 "My love?"
 "Yes, Flora, for I love you with my whole soul."
 "This is news to me."
 "It is an old story that my heart has known ever since I first saw you."
 "How about your wife?"
 "My wife?"
 "Yes."
 "I have no wife."
 "Ah! I thought you had."
 "I was married once, but my wife is dead."
 "Did she die a natural death?"
 "What do you mean?"
 "Did you kill her?"
 "Don't trifle with me, Flora, for I like not harsh words from lips that I love."
 "I do not know how to please you."
 "Say what I would wish to have you."
 "What is that?"
 "That you love me."
 "My dear doctor, I never loved any one in my life, not even my father, and my mother I hardly remember."
 "No, I do not love you, and I do not even like any one, unless it is the boy that is gone, and he quite won my regard."
 "I have no love and no friendships, Doctor Edgar."
 "But you will learn to love me."
 "It's a lesson you could never teach me."
 "May I at least try?"
 She laughed lightly, and said:
 "No, for I will not be a pupil nor have you for an instructor."
 "You hate me because you know what my life is, and yet your father is—"
 "All that is bad, and I have no more respect for him than for you; but he has been kind to me, and I ask no more, nor wish it from him."
 "You are a strange girl, Flora."
 "Yes, for I love these flowers about me more than all else. Here is your mail, and in leaving I do not wish you to fear me, or feel that I would betray you, for I would not do that which I deem mean for all your wealth, Doctor Edgar."
 And she went on with her bouquet-making, the while trilling a song in a voice that was strangely soft and full of music.
 With a muttered imprecation, Elegant Ed left the shop, his face black and threatening.

CHAPTER XVII.

WOLF SHOWS HIS HAND, BUT ELEGANT ED PLAYS TO WIN.

ELEGANT ED sat in his luxurious quarters smoking a fragrant cigar.
 He wore an embroidered dressing-gown, velvet cap and slippers, worked in gold, and looked not only very handsome, but the picture of honesty and contentment.
 His home was a flat over a drug store.
 It was a spacious flat, with parlor, sitting-room, several bed-chambers, dining-room and kitchen.
 It was superbly furnished, and with a certain taste that showed refinement in the occupant.
 There were two floors above, but he rented these himself that he might be the only occupant, and thus avoid too close scrutiny from neighbors of an inquisitive turn of mind.
 His servants consisted of a man and his wife. The former was an Irishman, the latter French.
 The man was a curiosity in his way, for he was so very ugly that his master called him Jo-Jo, the Dog-faced Man, and at times Chimpanzee.
 He dressed in livery, knew his business well, and executed it, and having committed some crime, of which Elegant Ed knew, he was held by his master as in a hand of iron.
 His wife, on the contrary, was as beautiful as her husband was hideous.
 She had a sad, uncomplaining face, and did the work of a menial, when to look at her she seemed to have been born a lady.
 Presently the door-bell rung, and Jo-Jo presented himself to see who it was had called.
 It was Wolf, in his disguise, and upon giving a password he was readily admitted to the handsome room up-stairs where Elegant Ed sat in such indolent luxury.
 "Ah! you here, Wolf?" said Elegant Ed in a lazy sort of way.
 "Yes, captain, I ran over on a little matter of business."
 "All right at the den?"
 "Yes, sir, all going well, and I paid the first dividend from our Philadelphia pickings, and

it brings you four thousand, which I brought you."
 "It should have been more."
 "Why, captain, we all thought we had done well."
 "I think differently."
 "But the town is new to us, sir."
 "So much the more reason why you should have done better; my share should have been ten thousand."
 "Captain!"
 "Yes; but who kept the books?"
 "I did, sir, of course."
 "Who sold the goods?"
 "I did, sir."
 "And you received the money?"
 "Yes, captain."
 "I see."
 "Sir?"
 "I say I see how it was; but who is in command?"
 "Tiger."
 "A good man; but give me my dividend."
 This was done, Wolf counting out the money slowly.
 "Now to the business that brought you over."
 "You remember that Mr. Kent Lomax?"
 "Yes," and the chief started slightly.
 "He is pressing me hard about you."
 "Well?"
 "I have arranged a little plan for you to get rid of him."
 "Yes?"
 "I have a friend who has a yacht, and, as it is pleasant weather, I thought we would sail to the entrance of the Chesapeake, and there meet Mr. Lomax."
 "I could bring him on board, show him that I have you a prisoner, and then get my reward."
 "I would suggest to run down to some point on the Virginia shore and have the duel, for he says all he desires is to force you into a personal combat with him, and then, when at sea, we can quietly drop him overboard, and that will be the end of him."
 "And then, having collected your pay from him, on my head, you wish me to pay you for his head?"
 "That was the way you said it should be, sir."
 "True; but who is this friend who has the yacht, and who are his crew, and how many?"
 "They are men from my old band, sir, the Street Wolves, and there will be the captain of the craft and two men."
 "I shall have to pay for the craft and their services?"
 "No, sir, for Mr. Lomax gave me a thousand dollars for that use."
 "Ah! well, when shall we start?"
 "Whenever you please, sir, and the sooner the better, for the yacht will be ready to-night and I will remain on board of her, all ready to await your coming."
 "You need not be known to the men on board so they can remember nothing about you."
 "A good idea; well, I wish to get rid of that man Lomax, and this is a good chance, while a sea voyage will help me just now; but I'd like to see your friend."
 "I can bring him to see you, sir."
 "No, it makes no difference: but where is the yacht?"
 "Lying off Forty-second street, sir, in the Hudson River."
 "Her name, for I am superstitious about names."
 "The Dolphin."
 "That signifies good-luck."
 "And your friend's name?"
 "He calls himself Captain Starboard, sir."
 "I see; well, I am delighted that you came, Wolf, and I wish you to stay and dine with me."
 "Oh, thank you, sir," and Wolf was delighted with his reception.
 "Dinner will be ready in about an hour, and I guess I can amuse you here; but let me go out and tell my Chimpanzee and its mate that I have a friend to dinner."
 Leaving the room Elegant Ed sought Chimpanzee, as he called his ugly valet and said:
 "Put on your street clothes and go to the foot of Forty-second street, North River."
 "You will find lying off there a yacht bearing the name of the Dolphin."
 "Get a boat and go out to her, telling her captain, his name is Starboard, that Mr. Wolf has sent for him, and that he is to come at once with you."
 "Fetch him here, let him in with your key and take him to the front furnished room above this flat."
 "Do you understand?"
 "Yis sur."

"Make no mistake, Jo-Jo."
 "No, sur."
 "Lose no time."
 "Yis, sur," and while the valet turned away to change his livery for street attire Elegant Ed passed on into the kitchen.

There was the valet's wife preparing dinner, and looking strangely lovely, even in her servant's attire, and strangely sad also.

"Star, I have a friend to dine with me to-day, and I wish the best of dinners, and the silver service, for I desire to pile on the agony for him, as I fear he is not long for this world of sorrow," and the man spoke in a sneering voice.

"Another victim?" the woman said in a tone of biting sarcasm.

"Maybe," and Doctor Edgar returned to the room where he had left Wolf, who had been lost in admiration at his surroundings, while he muttered to himself:

"He lives like a prince! well, some day I hope to live as well, and I am on the highway to it, for money increases in my purse at a rapid rate."

Re-entering his room, Elegant Ed made himself most agreeable to his guest, and Wolf was surprised to find his chief such a remarkably entertaining man.

He actually enjoyed the hour that elapsed before Jo-Jo came into the room and said:

"I would like to be after getting the wine for dinner, sur."

"Ah, yes, I will get them at once," and turning to Wolf, as Jo-Jo left the room, he continued:

"I have to keep my wine out of the reach of my man, or he'd be drunk all the time."

Leaving the room with this lie as an excuse, for Jo-Jo never drank, Elegant Ed proceeded up-stairs, and with a key opened a front room of the flat above his own.

It was plainly furnished as a bed-room, and it had an occupant—a stout, seamanlike man of forty.

"Captain Starboard, I believe?"

"Yes, sir."

"I am Doctor Edgar, and a friend of Wolf."

"Yes, sir," and the man seemed a trifle anxious.

"I believe you have entered into an arrangement with Wolf by which you are to take me on a cruise, use me as a decoy for him to get some money, and then kill me, throw me overboard at sea, or something of that kind; which will make him chief of the Land Sharks."

The man sat like one dazed, and Elegant Ed continued:

"I do not care to be a victim, and so I sent for you."

"I am Elegant Ed, Captain Cruel, the King of Cards—or whatever name you desire to call me; but I am surely chief of the Land Sharks' League, and I intend to so remain."

"Oh, sir!" gasped the man.

"Do you love Wolf very dearly?"

"Oh no, sir."

"You serve him only for money?"

"Yes, sir."

"How much does he pay you?"

"The yacht is my own, and he was to pay me for the voyage one thousand dollars, and then pay my men a couple of hundred each and all expenses."

"Well, pretend to serve him, but remember that you are in my pay, for I'll give you five thousand for the voyage, and pay your men far more liberally than he would, and also all expenses, and we'll live on the rest."

"Let your men know that they are to do as you say, and I will let you use me to get the reward for my apprehension, which Wolf is to get."

"When the party that pays it comes on board, we will sail, and then he is to go overboard, and along with him Wolf, while we return to New York greatly enriched, for what pickings you find on Wolf and the other man you can have."

"Now go back to your yacht, for Wolf is here, and remember, you do not know me, and what has passed between us is a dead secret?"

"I will so keep it, sir."

"Here is five hundred as a proof of my honesty toward you, so fit the yacht up well for me, as I love comfort, and to-morrow I will go to my grocer's and have a number of things sent on board."

"You are most generous, sir, and you can depend upon me," and Captain Starboard was running over with joy at his escape, as he felt he had at first been caught in a trap, and at the turn affairs had taken in his favor.

Returning to his rooms, Elegant Ed found

dinner ready, and when, an hour after, Wolf took his leave, he was half-drunk with joy, and half-drunk with wine, in fact he was completely intoxicated at his reception by his chief, the supposed success of his plot, and the anticipations of riches in the future, for little he dreamed that the candle he was lighting his way with was burning at the other end also.

CHAPTER XVIII.

DOG EAT DOG.

WHEN Captain Starboard returned to his yacht, he was full of what he had heard and gone through.

His men were, like himself, deeply-dyed villains, and, like all criminals, they were most curious, and the cause of his going ashore had excited them considerably.

The captain and his men were all sailors.

Not honest tars, by any means, for they had left a life on the ocean wave to follow thievery as a profession.

Once they had been honest men, then, tempted to pirate oysters in the Chesapeake, they had changed from that to smuggling, and next to robbing the homes along the shores.

Thus they went on from bad to worse until they reached New York, where they entered upon lives of crime of every description, as members of a band known as the Street Wolves.

"Mates, can you keep a secret?" asked Captain Starboard upon reaching his vessel.

"No need to ask, Cap, as yer know we kin," was the answer of one while the other smiled with a look of contempt at the question which implied doubt of them.

"Well, we shipped to serve my old friend Wolf, as you know?"

"Yes," they said in chorus.

"Now, Wolf is a wild lad, but he hain't got money enough for friendship to last for him, and it's money we are after."

"He offered me a fair price for my vessel, to go with him on a cruise, and obey his bidding, and I shares it with you."

"He wants to take a passenger, and that passenger, according to my idea, was not to reach land in safety."

"But I has seen this passenger, and he is onto Wolf's little game, and he just gives us the chance of doubling our money by secretly serving him."

"So this yacht and me is to go in his pay, though Wolf thinks we is his men, and pays us according."

"Do you say you go with me, mates?"

"I does."

"I'm for the money, if it's to serve ther devil, for I likes gold more than I does friendship," was the reply of the other man.

Thus it was settled, and Elegant Ed had won his point against the man that sought to betray him.

After leaving the handsome quarters of his chief, Wolf made his way down to the foot of Forty-second street, and finding a boatman, had him put him on board the Dolphin.

Captain Starboard and the two men greeted him pleasantly, and Wolf called them all into the cabin.

"Shipmates, I have been to see my man," he said in a mysterious way.

"We are to be ready to sail at any time, and he is to send on board a lot of good things for the voyage, for he is a high liver."

"Now, he thinks we are going on a pleasure cruise to Norfolk, and we are; but we are to meet a man there who is anxious to meet our passenger."

"When we reach Norfolk, I will find this gentleman and bring him on board, and we will take a short cruise to a handy place to land."

"There we are to go ashore, and there's to be a duel between our passenger and this stranger. "One will be killed sure, and perhaps both, and if both, so much the better."

"If one is killed, his body is to go aboard, to be buried at sea, and the other gentleman is to get lost overboard at night, so you see we will be free to run back into port, and no questions asked."

"Of course, our pickings from the two will be considerable, and whatever they have about them, in the way of money, we will divide, share and share alike."

"Now, mates, you know my little game, and your captain knows I can be trusted for all I say, while, after the voyage is over, I can promise you employment in my band of Land Sharks."

"What say you?"

"I'm with you, Wolf," said Captain Starboard.

"You kin count on me, Cap," said one of the men.

"I'll be on hand when wanted, whether it be to pick a pocket or cut a throat," remarked the third man.

"I thank you, mates, and you'll find me good pay and liberal."

Thus was this compact of villainy made, and, with an insight into the real state of affairs, knowing that it was a game of bluff, and a compact of treachery throughout, the reader can well understand that it was a case of "dog eat dog," to use one of the slangs of the street, but which is very appropriate here.

CHAPTER XIX.

THE MESSENGER BOYS.

AFTER the departure of Elegant Ed from her shop, Flora, the Flower Girl breathed more freely.

She felt that between them there was not one bond of sympathy, and why he had told her that he loved her she could not understand, for she said to herself:

"I really believe that in his heart he hates me, while I certainly have given him no cause to feel that I cared for him, and all my actions toward him have merely been my duty."

"He did not seem guilty when I accused him of having kidnapped Foxey, and yet he may be."

"Who else can be, if he is not?"

"He is the only one now in the city who knows the secret entrance and panel door into my room for all of the band are in Philadelphia."

"True, the letter from my father said he would be over, and bade me meet him at my old home, far up-town."

"Yet word came there that he could not come and while I was away the boy was kidnapped and my money and jewels stolen."

"And along with them that miniature of my mother."

"I would give all to get that back, for I have prized it so highly."

"I wonder if Elegant Ed did not send that dispatch pretending to come from my father, to call me away, that he might catch the boy?"

"It may be that he did, and I will find out, for I shall ask my father as soon as I know his Philadelphia address."

"Ah! here is a messenger boy."

She left the room as she spoke, and entered the shop, as she had seen through the glass door a messenger boy enter.

"Is this Miss Flora the Flower Girl?" asked the boy, who was in his uniform as a district messenger.

"Yes, I am Flora the Flower Girl."

"I was told to give you this package, and it's valuable."

Flora took a small box, sealed and addressed in a neat hand to

"MISS FLORA,

THE FLOWER GIRL.

No. 15 East —th st.,

City."

"Valuable."

"It was left at our office by a lady," said the messenger.

"I do not understand about it," Flora remarked.

"Perhaps if you'd open it you'd find out," suggested the boy.

Flora smiled at the very natural suggestion, and broke the seal.

In it she discovered her lost locket, the miniature of her mother, and she uttered a cry of joy as she saw it.

Around it was wrapped a piece of paper, upon which was scrawled:

"I did not run off and steal your money, miss, and do not know who did; but this I had in my hand and stuck to it, and now send it by a good lady who says she'll give it to you, and I believe she will."

"Don't fret for me, for I'll turn up all right."

"Foxey."

"The dear, brave boy!" said Flora, as the tears came into her eyes.

Then turning to the messenger, she handed him a dollar with the remark:

"This is for yourself, and I wish you to go back to your office and find out all that you can about the lady who left this little package at your office."

"Yes, miss," and the boy disappeared.

In half an hour he was back again with his report.

The manager knew nothing of the lady, more than that she had come in and asked to have the package delivered at the address upon it.

"This is very strange," muttered Flora, and it gave her food for considerable thought during the day and the night following.

It was on the next day that another messenger boy appeared at the flower store.

He brought no letter, but he gave a verbal order to the effect that Doctor Edgar was going to have a party of friends dine with him, and wished some lovely bouquets made up.

He also brought the money to pay for them, and stated that he would return for the flowers, if Flora would tell him when they would be ready.

She told him to return within an hour, and he departed, and promptly on time he came back, but customers had come in and Flora had been unable to finish more than two of the three, and the boy said, as he had another errand to do he would stop in at the office and send another boy to carry the flowers.

In a short while another messenger appeared, and the flowers being ready they were given to him.

"Where is I ter take 'em?" asked the boy.

"Have you not the address?"

"No miss, Dickie didn't give it ter me."

Flora turned and wrote a number and name upon a card.

"Take them there," she said, handing it to the boy, who departed with his sweet cargo.

Soon after the first boy again put in an appearance.

"Is Billy gone?" he asked.

"Yes, and he took the flowers."

"That's all right, miss, but I hurried back hoping to help him."

Flora gave him a button-hole bouquet, and as she was pinning it on his jacket in walked the first messenger, the same who had brought her the package containing the miniature.

"Good-by, miss, and thank you," said the other boy, and he quickly departed.

"Who was that kid, miss?" asked messenger boy No 1, glancing with a suspicious look at the one who had just departed.

"A messenger boy, as I think you might see from the uniform he wore."

"He didn't wear no regulation."

"How do you mean?"

"He didn't show up a number."

"Is that requisite?"

"It's the law, if that's what you mean, miss."

"Do you not know him?"

"Never seen him afore in my life."

"He said he was from your office."

"He just sweetly lied, fer he don't come from our lay-out."

"Then he comes from some other company; but why are you here?"

"Come to say ther lady had been in again, and she wanted ter know if the package had been delivered all right."

"And you told her that it had?"

"Yes, miss, but when ther manager asked her for her name, she just smiled sweetly and waltzed out of the office, and I thought I would come in and tell you."

"Take this for your pains," and she handed the boy a piece of silver, which had evidently been the aim that had brought him there.

"Do you know all the messenger boy companies?" asked Flora.

"I does, miss."

"And that boy you say belongs to none?"

"If he does, he hain't got his number on."

"Well, it may be some new company," and thus Flora dismissed the youth, though not the subject from her mind, as she began to ponder upon it after the boy had departed.

"I can soon find out if this is a trick," said the young girl, and she at once wrote upon a card, in large letters:

"BACK IN AN HOUR."

This she put upon the front door, and then retiring to her room, she robed herself for the street.

Fifteen minutes after, any one seeing the beautiful girl, fashionably dressed, tripping gayly along the street, would never have suspected her of being the keeper of a flower-store.

CHAPTER XXI.

FOXEY A PRISONER.

WHEN Foxey awoke from the stupor the chloroform had forced him into, he found himself in strange quarters.

It was dark, and yet light enough shone in through the window, to show him that he was in a large room, and by no means in uncomfortable quarters.

He was lying upon a bed, and in attempting to get up, to examine his surroundings, he discovered that he was in a wire cage.

The bed was completely surrounded with a net-work of wire, and with nothing inside to aid him, he found it impossible to get out.

Then came to him the recollection of what had occurred.

How he had been counting Flora's money, and

was looking at the miniature of a lovely woman, whom it seemed he had seen before, when he dropped to sleep.

Was he dreaming now?

What could it mean, for he seemed to be awake.

He stood up in his bed and felt the wire network all about him.

His outer clothing and his shoes had been removed, he discovered, and so he pinched his arm to see if he was really awake.

"I'm in a pickle of some kind," he muttered.

"But what is it, where am I, and what is to be done?"

"It looks to me as if I had been drugged into unconsciousness, and then brought here."

"Ah! I have the gold miniature, for I know it by the feeling," and he held up the locket, which he found in a pocket in his shirt.

How it got there he could not tell, but as it was his habit to carry one hand almost constantly there, it might have involuntarily dropped it there.

"What can I do?" he murmured.

As he could not answer this question satisfactorily he very quietly determined to make the best of his unfortunate situation, and so sink down to try and sleep, for his head was aching badly and he felt dizzy and uncomfortable.

Foxy was a thorough philosopher, and so he made the best of a bad situation, by almost at once sinking to sleep.

When he awoke the sun was shining into the room.

It was a large, pleasant room, evidently in the rear of the house, and it was plainly furnished.

The wire-work completely surrounded the bed, but had a door in one side and this was securely locked.

Foxy saw also that the windows were locked, so that they could not be raised.

The outer clothes that he had worn, when captured, lay upon a chair near, but he did not see his hat.

Presently the door opened and a face peered in.

Foxy heard a bolt removed, the rattling of a chain, and then the turning of a key upon the door opened, and he knew that he was securely locked in.

The face that looked in was, to the surprise of Foxey, a very handsome one, and to his greater surprise, it was a woman's.

Seeing Foxey sitting up the woman entered, remarking pleasantly:

"You are awake I see?"

"Yes, if I am not dreaming, for I cannot understand my being here," and Foxey, in his earnestness again dropped the slang and dialect of the street gamin.

"Do you know where you are?"

"No, madam."

"Do you know how you came here?"

"No, madam, I do not."

"What is the last thing that you remember?"

"Being in the place I work, and counting up the cash."

"Where was that?"

"At the shop of Flora the Flower Girl."

"You were brought here about midnight."

"By whom?"

"Two men."

"Why?"

"I do not know."

"Who are they?"

"I cannot tell you."

"They must have drugged me in some way, for I remember feeling very drowsy."

"They chloroformed you, I judge."

"May I ask who you are?"

"A servant."

"A servant?"

"Yes."

"You look the lady."

"Nevertheless I am a servant."

"And what is to be done with me?"

"I suppose you are in somebody's way and must be gotten out of it."

"I cannot think whose it can be."

"And I cannot tell you."

"You cannot, or you will not."

"I will only say that the one whom I serve wishes to hold you a prisoner, and it is my duty to obey."

"May I ask you to do me a favor, madam?"

"You are hungry and wish your breakfast, poor boy?"

"Oh, yes, I am always hungry; but I was kidnapped by men who will doubtless lead the one I work for to believe me dishonest, and that I stole her money and ran off."

"Now, I held on to this locket in some way, and I know how highly she prizes it, and I do not wish her to believe that I stole it, or ran off, after her trust in me."

"What is it you wish me to do?"

"Take this locket to the address I give you, after I have written a note and packed it up to send."

"I will bring you paper and sealing-wax to wrap it up when I have your breakfast ready," and unlocking the wire cage, the woman told Foxey he could come out and dress himself while she was absent.

This Foxey did, and looking from the rear windows to calculate the chances of escape, he discovered that there was not a ray of hope in that direction, as the window-sash was of iron, the glass being set in solid panes which he could not break, and to file through would take a long time, even if he had the implements to work with.

"That settles it," he said coolly, and he sat down to await the return of the woman, fully convinced that he was a prisoner in reality, and what the future would bring forth he could not imagine.

In half an hour the woman returned, and upon a large waiter she carried a really delicious breakfast.

There was a pot of coffee, some warm rolls, a broiled bird, a mutton-chop, delicious butter and a glass of milk.

"Well, this isn't bad prison-fare," said Foxey with a smile.

"I am glad you like it, my poor boy," the woman replied, in a kindly way.

"She calls me poor boy, but she'd go for me tooth and nail did I attempt to escape," thought Foxey, while aloud he said:

"You are very kind to me."

"I feel kindly toward you."

"Not enough so to allow me to escape?"

"No! If you attempted it, I would be forced to kill you."

And the woman spoke with an earnestness that proved she meant just what she said.

"Money would not bribe you?"

"No! I have no use for money now," was the sad response.

Foxy ate his breakfast with a relish, and then he tied up the locket in a neat little packet, addressed it to Flora, and gave it to the woman.

"If you will deliver that for me, I will bless you until my dying day," he said, earnestly.

"I will do so," was the low reply, and the woman left the room; and that she kept her word, the reader has already seen.

CHAPTER XXII.

A STRANGE VISITOR.

WHEN the messenger boy, who called for the flowers for Doctor Edgar, departed from the shop, he went briskly along the street until he had gotten a dozen blocks away.

Any one following him would readily assert that he appeared to be trying to turn any corner he came to.

At last he stopped by the side of a carriage that stood at the curb, on the side of a fashionable church.

It was a coupe with one horse, and a coachman in livery on the box.

In the coupe sat a lady, handsomely dressed, but closely veiled.

The messenger boy handed the flowers into the carriage, and, without appearing to notice them, the veiled lady asked:

"You found out where to deliver them?"

"Yes, miss."

"Give me the number, please?"

This the boy did, and the lady still waited.

In a little while, however, the other messenger boy appeared in sight, walking rapidly.

He approached the coupe, and the lady asked:

"Any new discovery?"

"Not any, for my pard here got the address, so your plot worked all right."

"I hope it will to the end; but now you can go, for I will not need you more to-day."

The two messenger boys touched their caps and departed, while the lady gave an order to the coachman and the coupe rolled away.

In a short while it drew up at a drug-store on the corners of two fashionable streets, and the lady got out and hastened to an entrance, which had the appearance of being the doorway of several flats.

Pulling the outer bell, the door was opened by a spring pull, and she stepped into a neat, but small vestibule.

Here she had to wait several minutes, and then the second door opened.

The one appearing was a servant in livery, and his face, once seen, was hard to forget, for it was Jo-Jo.

"Is Doctor Edgar at home?" the lady asked, in the sweetest of voices.

"No, miss, he's a'fther being away," answered Jo-Jo, anxious to see the face beneath the provoking veil.

"I am sorry."

"Yis, miss."

"So very sorry."

"So am I, miss."

"I was so anxious to see him."

"Yis, miss; you look it."

"I would like to leave him a note."

"I'll see that he's a'fther gittin' it, miss, upon his immediate return."

"You are so very kind."

"Yis, miss."

"I can see by your face that you have a kind heart."

"I have, leddy, though it's an ugly face I have."

"Beauty is but skin-deep, my man."

"Faith, an' I been a'fther hearing that same, of'en."

"Well, as Doctor Edgar is not in, I must write him a note, and I am in a great hurry, so just take this for yourself, and let me go up to a table where I can write."

As the lady spoke she slipped into the hand of Jo-Jo a twenty-dollar gold-piece.

Jo-Jo was dumb with amazement and delight.

Had he struck a prince, he wondered?

"Of course, lady, of course; come right up," and he led the way, for his pay per month was only twenty dollars, as Doctor Edgar was a hard taskmaster, and a mean one.

In his surprised delight, Jo-Jo forgot to close the door tight, and leading the lady up-stairs, thrust a pass-key into the door leading into his master's room, with the remark:

"You will find a table here, miss, with pen, ink and paper."

The lady glanced admiringly around the handsome rooms, with their elegant carpets, rare paintings and superb furniture, and seated herself at the table where Doctor Edgar was wont to do his correspondence.

There was a superb ink-stand there, gold pens, fancy paper-cutters, unique paper weights, and some fashionable paper and envelopes.

"Will you kindly get me a glass of water?" asked the lady, and bending double in a bow Jo-Jo disappeared.

In an instant the lady was on her feet, and almost as quick as a flash she had gone from one room into the other, and thus taken in the suite of parlor, bed-room and dining-room.

As she turned to retrace her way from the bed-chamber into the parlor, her eyes fell upon something that seemed to startle her.

Nor was it a wonder, for what appeared to be a painting, in an elegant frame, hanging flat upon the wall, had one end swinging out more than a foot, revealing an opening at the back.

Taking the end that had swung out, the lady pulled it further away, and saw that the painting worked on a hinge, and cleverly concealed a closet.

In this closet were bags of gold, evidently from their weight and appearance, some morocco cases, doubtless filled with jewelry. A tray with a large assortment of jewelry, and back of it silver cups, vases and salvers stood.

On a third shelf were several books, one of which was bound in red leather, and the title, in black letter, caught the lady's eye.

It was

"THE BOOK OF DOOM."

Around the lettering that composed the title was a chain, and upon the back of the book was stamped a gallows, with a man hanging by the neck.

Hastily opening it, the lady saw that the contents were written not printed.

In an instant she had slipped the book under her wrap, and, with a glance at the mechanism of the secret closet, discovered the spring that opened it.

"He forgot to shut it," she murmured, as she closed it tightly and then hastened into the next room.

She had not taken three minutes in her search, when Jo-Jo appeared as she resumed her seat, bearing a silver goblet of ice-water.

Thanking him for his kindness, the lady wrote a few lines, sealed the letter, and addressing it, gave it to Jo-Jo with the remark:

"Do not fail to give this to your master as soon as he returns to-day."

"Yis, miss, but he's not a'fther coming back to-day."

"Indeed! where is he?"

"He's gone on a yachting cruise, miss, for a week or more, with some friends—Saints presave me from lying, but that's a'fther being

himself this blissid minute coming up the stairs, for no one ilse but himsilf, and mesilf, have a pass-key."

Jo-Jo looked alarmed as he turned toward the door, which had been left ajar; but instead of Doctor Edgar entering a young girl appeared.

It was Flora the Flower Girl.

CHAPTER XXIII.

WIZARD WILL TO THE FRONT.

"HOWLY MOSES!" ejaculated Jo-Jo, as he beheld another female, and Flora the Flower Girl stepped into the room.

"I was seeking Doctor Edgar, and finding the outer door open came up."

"Is he in?" she asked quietly.

"No, miss, he's out."

"The Flower Girl!" cried the first visitor.

"What? you here, lady, in Doctor Edgar's house?" was Flora's rejoinder.

"Yes, and I am sorry not to have found Doctor Edgar at home."

"You know him?"

"As Elegant Ed," was the calm reply.

Flora gazed at the veiled face before her in amazement, in a vain effort to read who it was beneath it; but she could not penetrate the gauze, and said slowly:

"Who are you, lady?"

"I am one who wishes you no harm, one who is sorry to see you here, and would beg you to at once depart."

"Mither of Moses, phat's the mather with the females?" cried Jo-Jo.

"Will you not tell me who you are?" again asked Flora.

"First tell me why you came here?"

"To search for one who was in my employ, the boy whom I told you I feared was kidnapped."

"Elegant Ed denied to me that he had stolen the boy, and yet I did not wholly believe him, and I came to see for myself, as well as to discover whether I was tricked into giving the address of the Land Shark chief to those who had no right to know."

"You gave it to me, and I have a right to know it," was the lady's response.

"I did not give it to you."

"To others for me, for it was my plan to get it, and I managed it through my two messenger boys."

"Ha! you are other than you seem, and I believe you are—"

She hesitated, and the stranger asked:

"Who do you think I am?"

"I believe you are Wizard Will, the Boy Ferret," cried Flora the Flower Girl, and the answer came quickly, as the supposed maiden drew a revolver:

"I am Wizard Will, and that man is my prisoner."

"Be jabbers, I'm a did man! ochone, ochone!" groaned Jo-Jo.

As he spoke the door was flung back and a woman entered.

It was Star, the beautiful wife of the hideous Jo-Jo.

"What does this mean?" she said sternly, glancing from one to the other of the two strangers.

"It means that I am a detective, in the disguise of a woman, put on to track Elegant Ed to his lair, and I have done so," said Wizard Will.

"Elegant Ed to his lair, and you have come here?" said the woman.

"Yes."

"You are mistaken, sir; these are the rooms of Doctor Edwin Edgar."

"And you are mistaken, madam, for I know that the occupant of these rooms is Elegant Ed the King of the Crooks."

"My dear sir, I have lived here in the service of Doctor Edgar for over a year, my husband and I, and we know that you are wrong."

"I know that Doctor Edgar is the alias for Elegant Ed."

"Great God! can this be true?" cried the woman, while Jo-Jo said:

"We're done for sure, Star, for we've been a'fther sarving the Devil himself."

"I knew that Doctor Edgar was a bad man, I knew that he had done many wild deeds, for he won my heart, promised to marry me, was opposed by my parents, and proposed that we should be married at a masquerade ball."

"I consented, and a clergyman friend performed the ceremony, both of us in our masks."

"When unmasked, I discovered that I had married this man, the coachman of Doctor Edgar."

"Holding the power of a secret over this man, and laughing at my love for him, Doctor Edgar

had made his coachman dress up as he was dressed, and thus we were married."

"I was driven from my home, and Edwin Edgar, as I have known him, laughed at me, while this man, my husband, came to me and told me he would protect and care for me."

"I accepted his offer, came to New York, and when starvation was staring us in the face, my husband again met Edwin Edgar, and he asked him to become his valet."

"He said he had just taken pleasant quarters, and was looking for a man and his wife for servants."

"I at once decided to come and act as servant, and we both hoped some day our time for revenge would come."

"But we have served him faithfully, and now that you have told me that Doctor Edgar is Elegant Ed, the outlaw, who lives with a rope about his neck, I feel that we have gained our revenge."

The woman had spoken quickly and earnestly, and both Wizard Will and Flora the Flower Girl seemed deeply impressed with all that she said, while the former remarked:

"My dear lady, I pity you deeply, and, that it is not my desire to make the innocent suffer for the guilty, this young lady could testify."

"The man you loved, you have done well to escape by marrying this honest fellow, and I believe that you are both innocent, as far as knowing Doctor Edgar in his real character."

"I have tried hard to capture him, and though I have four times over discovered his abiding-place he escapes me."

"As for you, I bid you depart from here, and I shall not make public your presence here."

"As you are poor, though serving a wealthy robber, let me supply you, from his savings, something to give you a start in life."

"Await me here!"

So saying, Wizard Will went into the room where was the secret closet, and, opening it by touching the spring he had discovered, he took from one of the shelves a large bag of gold, containing not less than three thousand dollars.

"Here, take this, for it will give you a start in life, and you need have no compunctions about it, as it would simply go as a prize to the captors of Elegant Ed."

"Now, I would advise you to lose no time in getting away from here, though I would first have you tell me all that you can that may lead to the capture of that noted villain."

"You can tell, sir, how little we know, as we have only known him as Doctor Edgar through all."

"True, it was to his interest, I can understand, to give you no hold upon him; but can you tell me where he has gone?"

"On a yachting cruise South down to Norfolk, I heard him say."

"Ah! when did he start?"

"This afternoon."

"Do you know the yacht?"

"It was the Dolphin, miss, I mane, sur, writ in gilt letters on the stern, and with a gold fish of that kind on the bow, miss—I mane sur, ag'in, sur, but them silfsame petticoats is a'fther foolin' me entirely, while it's a handsome woman ye looks all the toime."

Wizard Will laughed, and Flora joined in, while the latter asked:

"How many went along?"

"I knows there was a'fther being three min on the boat, miss, and anither by the name of Wolf, that was here visitin' the masther."

"A man by the name of Wolf?" quickly asked Will.

"Yis, sur."

"I know him, and he's second in villainy only to Elegant Ed."

"You are right there, sir," returned Flora, the Flower Girl, and then turning to Star, she asked:

"Do you know if Elegant Ed brought a boy here several nights ago?"

"He did, miss."

"As a prisoner?" quickly asked Flora.

"Yes, for he brought him here under the influence of chloroform, and carried him to the back room up-stairs, which he uses as a prisoner room, and bade me see that he did not escape."

"Describe the boy!" quickly said Wizard Will.

"There is but one that I ever saw like him, and he was in my employ, and Elegant Ed kidnapped him and robbed me."

"Foxey, it was," cried Wizard Will.

"Yes, his name was Foxey; did you know him?" asked Flora.

"Well, I may as well confess to you that he was one of my men, my best one, and he went to your shop to try and find out thereby the abode of Elegant Ed."

Flora's face flushed and paled, as Wizard Will made this confession; but, conquering what words of anger she seemed about to utter, she said instead:

"Well, he was a noble fellow and served me well, if he did cleverly deceive me, for I never suspected him of being a detective."

"Any more than you did me, when I ordered those flowers from you, for it was to communicate with Foxey that I went there."

"But, tell me, madam, is Foxey here?" and Wizard Will turned again to Jo-Jo's wife.

"No, he was taken away with Doctor Edgar this afternoon."

"On the yacht?"

"Yis, sur, for I went down to the landing with the baggage, and the boy was after going on board," Jo-Jo remarked.

"And it is a schooner yacht?"

"Yis, sur."

"Then I too shall take a cruise," was the reply of Wizard Will, and going to the window he threw it up and signaled to his coachman, who drove up to the entrance of the flat.

"Go and tell Captain Daly to come here and to bring with him four good men."

"Also tell him to send word around to my quarters to have my yacht ready to sail at once, and with her full crew on board."

The coachman, who was a policeman in livery, saluted and drove rapidly away.

When Wizard Will turned from the window he asked of Jo-Jo:

"Is there any one else living in this flat?"

"Only Doctor Edgar, my husband and myself," announced the woman.

"And the flats above?"

"The one directly above has no occupant; the top floor has a back room furnished as a prison, and a front chamber as half-sitting and bedroom."

"Then you three are all that occupy this house?"

"Yes, sir."

"Is there anything you wish to show me about it?"

"Nothing, sir, more than you will see for yourself."

"Then I advise you to get ready to depart at once, and one of you can go to the drug store and call a messenger to send for a carriage, as I do not care to have the police find you here."

"I thank you, sir, my husband will call a carriage while I pack up, which will be a light matter, as we were poor when we came here, and we have accumulated but little since, though I did manage to save up our pay, of fifty dollars a month."

"Well, I congratulate you upon getting out of the service of a man who has a rope about his neck."

"Now pray do not delay; but where is the young lady?"

"She has gone, sir; she went while you were talking to your coachman."

"It is just as well, for I would not have detained her," and Wizard Will began to look about the rooms, while Jo-Jo and his wife set to work to pack up and get off, delighted at their escape.

In half an hour they were ready, a carriage was at the door, and bidding Wizard Will goodbye they departed, leaving him alone in the house of the King of the Crooks.

But he had not long to wait, for Captain Ryan Daly soon arrived with his men, and the young detective met him at the door.

The captain was quite taken aback by seeing a handsome young girl, as he believed Will to be, walk up to him, and the Boy Ferret laughed heartily at fooling his chief, who remarked:

"Will, you'll pull the wool over Satan's eyes yet," and the two walked into the elegant room of the King of the Crooks.

Then Wizard Will told his story, just as all had occurred, and just what he had done, even to giving Jo-Jo and his wife the gold, and ended by saying:

"Now, captain, I have ordered the yacht ready, and I'll give chase after the Dolphin, and after all we may yet hang Elegant Ed."

"If any one will catch him, you will, my Boy Wizard, so shuck your petticoats, remove your breeches, and set sail, while I take possession of this palatial home of that properly-named King of the Crooks."

Going down to his waiting coupe, Wizard Will sprang in and was driven rapidly away.

When it drew up at the door of the Boys' Lodging House, where were the quarters of the Boy Detectives' League, Wizard Will sprang out, sashel in hand, for he had cast aside his fine feathers as a girl, and come out as his natural self.

An hour after, down the harbor of New

York, under the shadows of night, glided the yacht of the Boy Detectives, and its errand was to follow to the bitter end the Dolphin, on board of which was Elegant Ed, the King of the Crooks, and Foxey, the Vagabond, a prisoner to men who would show him no mercy, did they know, or discover, that he was in the Secret Service and on their track.

CHAPTER XXIV.

THE FATE OF THE DOLPHIN.

BEFORE a fair breeze the Secret Service yacht glided down the harbor of New York.

Upon her deck, and at the helm, was her young commander, Will Raymond, the Wizard, and his crew of brave boys, lolled about ready to do his slightest bidding.

There were a dozen of them, all told, counting the negro cook, "Doctor Charcoal," as they called him, and the yacht was thoroughly fitted, stored, and carried ample arms for the use of her daring boy crew.

Down the coast she headed, after rounding the Hook at dawn, and under a pressure of sail went bowling merrily along.

She was a good sailer, and her crew watched her closely, for they knew that the Dolphin had a start of some ten hours.

Wizard Will was anxious to catch the other yacht at sea, and outside of the marine league, as he had no requisition to capture them in another State.

Toward sunset they beheld a three-masted schooner coming slowly up the coast, for she was heavily laden, and Wizard Will stood toward her, so as to speak with her captain.

As he drew near he hailed:

"Schooner ahoy!"

"Ahoy ther yacht!" answered a gruff voice.

"Have you seen a small schooner yacht standing southward?"

"Yes, passed her about five hours ago I guess, in a light breeze; but she got a stiff breeze soon after, and went off lively, so you'll have ter hump along if it's a race," and with a wave of his hand in thanks, Wizard Will held on his way once more.

Thus the little vessel held to her course, and one night, when a storm was threatening, she headed southwest, having rounded Cape Charles, Virginia, which was some three leagues off her starboard quarter.

"Hark!" suddenly called out Wizard Will who held the helm.

There were but few of the crew on deck, and all listened attentively.

Then, from out of the sea, it seemed, came a faint halloo.

"It is a voice, and off on the starboard bow."

And so saying, Wizard Will headed in the direction of the sound.

"Schooner ahoy!" again called out the voice.

"Ay! ay! We are coming!" Will shouted back, while up from below came the boy crew, who had heard the response.

Nearer and nearer drew the yacht to the one who had hailed, and then Will called out:

"Whereaway?"

"Dead ahead!" was the reply.

A moment more and the yacht luffed sharp, a rope was thrown, and a form was drawn on deck.

"Foxey! and out of the sea!" cried Wizard Will in amazement, and his word were echoed in chorus by the other boys.

"Yes, I'm Foxey, and out o' ther sea, Cap'n Will."

"But give me a rest, for I'm clean played out, as I has been hanging to the bowsprit for hours."

Leaving the helm in charge of one of his comrades, Wizard Will led Foxey into the cabin.

There the poor, worn-out boy was soon dressed in dry clothing, and, with a mild brandy toddy under his belt, sunk to sleep.

In an hour he woke up refreshed and quite himself again.

Instantly he went on deck, and taking a seat near Wizard Will, asked in his quaint way:

"Where going, Cap'n Will?"

"To Norfolk."

"You was in chase of the Dolphin?"

"Yes."

"Thought as much."

"Yes, we left New York some hours astern of her."

"You know'd I were on board?"

"Yes."

"Thought so; but, you don't need ter foller ther Dolphin no more."

"Why, Foxey?"

"She's at ther bottom."

"Do you mean it?"

"Sunk clean as a whistle."

"How?"

"We got caught in a sudden squall, that for a few moments made things look black, and in the midst of it, up loomed a big steamer, smash she came ag'in' us, and ther yacht were cut in two."

"I made a jump, and I caught onter a piece o' ther bowsprit, and then ther steamer passed on."

"Ther yacht went down in less than a minute, and though we hailed ther steamer, she did not stop for us, and some of our gang were hurt by the crash and went down."

"Then I seen Wolf swimming near, and I called to him to come where I was, as the spar would hold us both; but he swam away, and I seen no more of him."

"And Elegant Ed?"

"He were killed, I guesses, for he were standin' right where the bows of ther steamer struck us, and I seen him fall back."

"Then I got too much business on hand to look after myself, to have an eye on other folks, and now you knows it all."

"And you believe all else on board were lost?"

"I know it, Cap'n Will."

"What a pity he has cheated the gallows."

"So 'tis, and t'others too, for they was all a hard lot o' sinners, as I knows, for I thinks they meant to kill me, toss me overboard, or something, and that is why they didn't mind what they said before me."

"And you know why they were going to Norfolk?"

"I know it all, cap'n."

"And how did Elegant Ed capture you?"

In a few words Foxey told just how he had been surprised, chloroformed and borne off, and, after having been kept a prisoner in Elegant Ed's home for awhile, he had been taken on board the yacht.

"I'm anxious to let that good girl, Flora, the Flower Girl, know I didn't steal from her, for she's a mighty nice little woman, Cap'n Will, and I hated to deceive her; but then it was business."

"Did you find out why she served the Land Sharks?"

"Not a sillabub; she's as dumb as a oyster about herself."

"Well, we will put back for New York, and let Captain Daly know the fate of the Dolphin, and how Elegant Ed was born to be drowned, for he escaped hanging."

So saying, Wizard Will had the yacht put about, and the pretty little vessel went swiftly on her way back to New York, her cruise suddenly terminated by the fate that had overtaken the Dolphin and her crew.

CONCLUSION.

The yacht arrived in safety at her anchorage in New York harbor, and Wizard Will, accompanied by Foxey, hastened to headquarters to seek Captain Ryan Daly.

That genial gentleman received them warmly and listened to the story that each had to tell.

"Well, boys, the truth is, that, after all, Elegant Ed does not hang; but it is a great satisfaction to know that he, and his pal, Wolf, are at the bottom of the sea."

"The Land Sharks have left New York, to seek safer abiding-places, so Will, you have the satisfaction of having driven them out of town."

"This is all the news that I can give you, I believe, unless it is that your pretty Flower Girl has also mysteriously disappeared."

"Kidnapped?" asked Foxey, quickly.

"Oh, no, for she has packed up and departed, and the flower-store is to let."

"Where can she have gone, I wonder?" asked Foxey.

"What! Foxey, has she taken your heart with her?" asked Captain Daly, with a smile.

"Guess she has, sir, for I liked her mightily, and would like to find her, as she must think me a thief."

"No, no, Foxey, she knows that Elegant Ed took her money when he kidnapped you," Wizard Will remarked.

Soon after the boys took their leave, and after a run home to see his mother and sister, Wizard Will put all of his force to find out where Flora the Flower Girl had gone.

But all to no use, for Flora could nowhere be found, and her disappearance had to be set down as one of the strange mysteries of the great metropolis.

But the Boy Detectives solved many mysteries, and won favor in the eyes of the Secret Service chiefs and the heads of the police force, who regarded Wizard Will and his Boy Pard, Foxey, the Vagabond, as the best detectives they had ever known.

THE END.

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